

# Family Childcare: Supporting Daily Lives and Livelihoods

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## ABSTRACT

Childcare provided by extended family members (mainly grandparents), operating in the non-marketed, unpaid, informal economy, accounts for the largest proportion of all childcare used by working parents in the UK. Yet policymakers continue to consider childcare needs and provision in terms of formal childcare only such as day nurseries, registered childminders and out-of-school clubs. This thesis provides much needed insight into the socio-cultural, political and economic processes which influence childcare selection, observing the way in which individual (or household) agency and structural constraints interact and highlighting the potential tension between social well-being and economic rationality. This is considered within the context of household provisioning, and the interdependence of the complementary (or informal) and formal economies, by demonstrating the vital role of 'family childcare' as an unpaid contribution from mainly non-resident grandparents which complements the formal economy by allowing parents to work, while also contributing to household livelihoods and the social well being of working parents.

The positive and negative aspects of the family childcare relationship have been explored in an empirical study of two socio-economically contrasting city wards of Newcastle upon Tyne, providing statistical evidence of the high levels of use of 'family childcare' in particular, presented with other data which offers a more 'rounded understanding' of the parents' and childcarers' subjective experience. This in-depth study contributes to the contemporary debates about family obligation and normative consensus, and the 'nature of care' and whether or not care provided by family (or friends and neighbours) should be paid.

The key warning from this study is that the current 'taken for granted' view held by the UK Government ignores the potential for family conflict created by *excessive* dependence on family childcare, and the objective consequences in terms of lost income and future pension entitlements for those providing it (mainly grandparents). The longer-term implications for the planning of childcare provision are considered, focusing on ways in which the beneficial aspects of the family childcare relationship could be preserved, at least on a part-time basis, by providing proper short and long-term support. This looks to the future of the value of care in all of society, recognising that formal childcare has a part to play, but that not everyone wants to relinquish *all* care to the market, calling for systems that facilitate the combination of childcare to fit the social, moral and economic circumstances of parents and carers.



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*"You are leaving the most precious thing in the world...its hard."*

[Mother working full-time - case study household 2]

A parent's instinct and responsibility is to protect as well as to provide for their children. It is little wonder then that many parents find it very difficult to leave their children, especially when they are very young, as entrusting others with the responsibility of looking after your child can be daunting. Like many mothers, I have experienced the anxiety of leaving my child for the first time and, as described by the mother above, it is 'hard'. I was concerned about his emotional well-being as well as his safety, hoping I was not causing him distress or harm by leaving him for long periods of time while I went out to work. With changing patterns of work and employment more parents, especially mothers, face this dilemma on a daily basis. While once it was economically viable and politically advantageous (Borchorst 1990) for mothers to stay home to look after the children while fathers earned the 'family wage', most families now require two incomes (Bruegel et al. 1998). Furthermore, many mothers now want to hold on to a labour market career, despite the difficulties of leaving their children. As a result the UK, like other developed economies, is experiencing a 'socio-economic transformation' (Esping-Anderson 1999) where the role of women is changing dramatically, especially in terms of their participation in the labour market. The number of women with pre-school children in paid employment in the UK has more than doubled since the 1970s rising from 16 per cent in 1973 to 39 per cent by 1996 (Berthoud and Gershuny 2000) and while the main growth has been part-time work (Thair and Risdon 1999), the result is mothers are spending more time away from the home whether on a full-time or part-time basis.

The combination of this increase in the number of working mothers and the continued long hours worked by fathers in the UK (O'Brien and Shemilt 2003), makes it unlikely that parents can satisfy their own childcare needs and therefore they must share the responsibility with others. While it has become more commonplace to turn to the market to replace other types of 'women's work' such as housework (Gregson and Lowe 1993), in the UK in particular, using market based formal childcare such as day nurseries or registered childminders remains not only financially unrealistic for many parents (Daycare Trust 2001) but in some situations it is also socially unacceptable (Duncan et al. 2004). So, just how do parents manage now that more mothers are in paid work? And, who is looking after the children?



This thesis provides a comprehensive exploration of one solution to the 'childcare deficit' (Purdy 1998) to which parents in the UK continue to turn. It is a study of childcare provided by family members, friends or neighbours, often referred to as 'informal childcare' but which is presented here as 'complementary childcare'<sup>1</sup>. In addition, as it is mainly family women (grandmothers) who provide this care, this thesis particularly explores the nature of what I have termed 'family childcare'. There is a considerable evidence suggesting complementary childcare is the most commonly used childcare among parents in the UK, especially working parents (Marsh and McKay 1993) (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999) (Whitherspoon and Prior 1991) (Thomson 1995) (Bridgwood et al. 2000). Nevertheless, very little is known about the nature of complementary childcare and even less is known about the substantial number of complementary childcarers who provide this support on a regular, weekly basis.

The reason so little is known about complementary childcare is that previous large-scale childcare studies have focused on the use of, and demand for, formal childcare services. This was particularly apparent in the most recent official childcare survey carried out in the late 1990s on behalf of the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to provide baseline data to the UK Government for planning and development of childcare policies. The survey found that nearly three-quarters (70%) of working mothers relied on complementary childcare to allow them to work (LaValle et al. 1999). Yet, despite this confirmation of the importance of this childcare, it was not explored as a dedicated area of analysis. Instead, the emphasis in this, and other studies, has been on factors preventing the use of formal childcare such as cost and availability, rather than approaching childcare use from the complementary childcare perspective and therefore concentrating on reasons why parents might prefer their children to be looked after within the context of a close family relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Others have also preferred to use this term 'complementary' when referring to the informal economy as it overcomes the negative connotations associated with the word 'informal' which can imply illegal or extra-legal activities in the 'black economy' (Wheelock and Jones 2002). As this term encapsulates the supportive, and indeed the complementary, nature of this childcare in relation to the formal economy, 'complementary childcare' is used instead of informal childcare throughout this thesis.



Those working towards the advancement of our understanding of the needs of parents and children in relation to childcare and early years provision have stressed the importance of understanding the nature of complementary childcare (Moss et al. 1998). This has been identified as necessary at a local and national level to inform planning and delivery of services which respond to the concerns and preferences of parents. Others have highlighted the need for more information about the social and economic consequences of the family members (along with friends and neighbours) who are complementary childcarers (Land 2002b). However, when this study began in 1999, there had been no research specifically dedicated to complementary childcare in the UK. Therefore, the evidence available about its importance to parents at a social, as well as an economic level, was scattered and mainly impressionistic, often based on anecdotal accounts from those working with parents in the community.

More recently, there have been a small number of complementary childcare studies (Wheelock and Jones 2002) (Jones 2004) (Brown and Dench 2004), which have more thoroughly explored socio-cultural, as well as economic factors and have also included socio-demographic information about complementary childcarers. However, gaps remain in both the empirical and the theoretical analysis of complementary childcare, as the tendency has been to focus on the positive aspects of this childcare in terms of social well-being, love and affection, especially in relation to inter-generational relationships when grandparents provide the childcare. While these are important advantages of complementary childcare, it is also vital not to overemphasise the *love* aspects and therefore obscure the *labour* involved (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983) or to overlook the social and economic consequences for childcarers (Land 2002b). Furthermore, no study has explored thoroughly the relationship between parents and complementary childcarers. As these are mainly family members, this leaves unanswered questions about the effect of family childcare on inter-family relationships. How do parents feel about relying so heavily on family members? How do family members feel about providing regular childcare? And, does the provision of this childcare change the nature of the family relationship?

## Timeliness

As well as addressing these gaps in our understanding of complementary childcare, the study presented here was also timely in terms of policy developments in childcare in the late 1990s. At this time, the first ever National Childcare Strategy (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998) was introduced in the UK. While it was welcomed for its recognition of the importance of childcare to parents and the economy as a whole, its introduction also raised questions about the appropriateness of the approach and whether this was at odds with the preferences and childcare behaviour of UK parents. As one of the first major initiatives of the New Labour Government when they came to power in 1997, the National Childcare Strategy was central to their agenda for change through a programme of social investment to attack child poverty and social exclusion. With a pledge to support families and children, in particular working families, it was clear that childcare provision was crucial to New Labour's overall 'welfare to work' strategy, especially if mothers with young children were to enter the labour market.

The UK still has 3.1 million non-working parents with children under 16, most of whom are mothers primarily with a child under 5. The economy would benefit significantly if more of these parents chose to join the labour market. (H M Government (Department of Trade and Industry) 2000, pg. 9, para. 2.7)

Introduced in 1998, the National Childcare Strategy reinforced a commitment to the integration of education and care for pre-school children, based on findings from research of the positive impact of high quality collective childcare on children's social, cognitive and emotional development (Sylva et al. 2003). Therefore, a major aim of the National Childcare Strategy was to extend the number of free, part-time pre-school places, mainly in a primary school environment, for all 3 and 4 year olds. However, the evidence of the beneficial effects of a collective environment on very young babies and toddlers was less conclusive. Research was also emerging that while after age 2 children seemed to benefit from high quality collective care this was not the case for the first 18 months in particular when spending long periods of the week in day nurseries could result in insecure attachment (Leach 1997)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The suggestion from the 'Families, Children and Child Care' (FCCC) longitudinal study was that very young children might benefit more from an intimate relationship provided by a close individual carer. This study focused on the presence or absence of a mother on a child's development. However, more recently published findings discuss the role of grandparents and other relatives - see (Leach *et al* 2006).



There was also evidence that parents themselves want to remain what I have termed 'childcare self-sufficient' by minimising the need for non-parental childcare through more flexible working arrangements (LaValle et al. 1999). The National Childcare Strategy nevertheless proceeded with a 'mixed economy' approach to childcare. This focused on the promotion of private childcare, providing help with the costs to low-income parents if they were using formal, registered childcare through a system of Childcare Tax Credits. The approach relied on universal models of behaviour based on 'economically rational' assumptions that parents would respond to financial incentives when choosing childcare. These models consistently undervalue the importance of non-monetary factors in terms of social well-being. Furthermore, those using complementary childcare could not claim Childcare Tax Credit and therefore the National Childcare Strategy was excluding a large proportion of UK parents.

Implementation of the National Childcare Strategy was at the local level through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs). In Newcastle upon Tyne, in the North East of England, the local EYDCP quickly recognised the need for a comprehensive understanding of the role of complementary childcare to enable them to develop locally sensitive childcare provision to respond to the needs of parents and children. In particular, local knowledge and context was necessary because of cultural differences between the 'North' and the 'South' where most childcare policy is developed. As the regional capital of the North East with a long working class history and strong networks of families living in close proximity, it was expected that childcare provided by extended family would be particularly important in certain areas of Newcastle. In addition, a local audit of childcare suggested very high use, especially in the most disadvantaged areas. The indications were that decisions to use family childcare were based on traditional family norms and expectations as well as financial constraints (Newcastle EYDCP 1999a). Committed to finding out more about parental preferences in relation to complementary childcare, Newcastle EYDCP, in collaboration with Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Newcastle, submitted a PhD CASE studentship proposal to the Economic Social and Research Council (ESRC) to support the study presented here.



It was at this stage that I became involved in the project, as the successful candidate for the PhD CASE studentship. Having completed my Social Policy undergraduate degree in Sociology and Social Policy at Newcastle University in 1996, I had been working as a university researcher in health services research. However, my main interests remained with the socio-economics of the household and changing patterns of work and employment, especially in relation to women's employment and the constraints they face in the home and workplace. Furthermore, having lived out of the country for many years, I returned to my hometown of Newcastle in the early 1990s and developed an interest in regional development and regeneration. I was brought up in a disadvantaged area of Newcastle and I was particularly keen to contribute to the understanding of how parents, especially those living in social deprivation, manage to provide for themselves and their children.

As a young child, I had experienced first-hand the constraints my own mother faced when trying to balance work and childcare as even then, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, like many other working class families the male breadwinner model was 'more myth than reality' in our household (Barrett and McIntosh 2000). As my father's employment was always insecure, our family had relied on my mother's income and we would not have been able to survive economically had it not been for the support of our equally low-income extended family that looked after me and my brother while my mother worked. Therefore, while at the beginning of this study I had no children of my own, I had always been aware of the impact childcare has on the lives of women in particular. Indeed, this had been one of the reasons I had delayed having children. In addition, I had witnessed my own friends and family struggle with childcare costs and arrangements and marvelled at the lengths to which some had had to go simply to allow them to go out to work to provide for their family. From a personal perspective, I therefore felt strongly that this was an important study. I wanted an academic understanding of the situation of parents living in Newcastle as they struggle with work and childcare and to investigate the importance of the vital support provided by their family in particular. Furthermore, in terms of timeliness, this agenda was crucial to the early planning and development process within the Newcastle EYDCP to which I was able to contribute through the production of interim reports and the final research reports which were submitted at the end of the 3 year studentship in 2002 (Hall 2002a; Hall 2002b).

## **Aims**

The overall purpose of the study is to investigate the role of complementary childcare in supporting the daily lives and livelihoods of parents living in different socio-economic circumstances and to gain an understanding of the social and economic experiences of complementary childcarers. However, this goes beyond the narrow view of household provisioning as purely financial, to include the provision of non-monetary factors which contribute to social well-being (Dawson 1998) (Wheelock et al. 2003). For this reason the study is not confined to working parents, but also includes households where at least one parent is at home with the children to gain a better understanding of the contribution of complementary childcare within a wider theoretical understanding of total household provisioning. The specific, individual aims to achieve these contributions to empirical research and theoretical understandings of complementary childcare are summarised below. These are followed by further discussion of why investigation of each of these areas is important to the overall purpose of the study.

- To identify and measure the extent, range and incidence of (unregistered and unregulated) complementary childcare used for children of different ages (between 0-11years) by a randomly selected sample of households in two urban locations of Newcastle upon Tyne with contrasting socio-economic characteristics.
- To explore the interrelations between the patterning of complementary and formal childcare and to identify the main reasons childcare was being used (eg. whether to allow parents to work, to allow them to study, in emergency situations or for social reasons)
- To provide detailed information about the living and working circumstances of family members, friends and neighbours who support parents by providing complementary childcare on a regular weekly basis.
- To investigate how socio-cultural, economic and political factors interact when parents are selecting childcare and to explore the nature and perceptions of care in relation to childcare in particular.
- To explore the impact of 'family childcare' on family relationships from the perspective of parents and complementary childcarers.
- To contribute to theoretical understandings and policy implications of the interrelations between the formal and the complementary sectors.



To confirm the importance of complementary childcare it is first of all necessary to measure statistically its use in relation to other types of childcare. When this study began, this data was not available for Newcastle upon Tyne as neither the local childcare audit (Newcastle EYDCP 1999a) nor the only other local study of complementary childcare that was being carried out at the same time as this study (Wheelock et al. 2000), were able to work from a representative sample. Therefore, to test the hypotheses that complementary childcare is the most commonly used type of childcare used by parents in Newcastle (especially working parents) requires quantitative data based on a survey of parents using a randomly selected sample. In terms of the comparative element of the study, it is also important to be able to compare use between households living in different social and economic situations to allow further exploration of the interaction between childcare costs and non-monetary factors which influence how parents select childcare.

Producing data on patterns of childcare is also necessary to establish how parents use complementary childcare, either as an exclusive form of childcare, or in combination with formal childcare services such as day nurseries, registered childminders and out-of-school provision. Data on how parents manage their weekly childcare requirements is also linked to reasons for use and therefore data is required about why additional, non-parental 'substitute' childcare is needed. Finally, producing statistical data about the socio-demographic characteristics of complementary childcarers, such as their living and working arrangements, as well as their state of health, is essential in order to assess the importance of social and economic circumstances in terms of their overall experience of complementary childcare.

Exploration of socio-cultural factors that influence the value parents and complementary childcarers place on complementary childcare is crucial to the study. Framed within the context of the sociological agency versus structure debate, it is important to explore decisions about childcare in terms of the interaction between active or 'purposeful choice' (Folbre 1994) based on socio-culturally driven preferences, and 'force of circumstances' because of economic or political constraints such as the cost of childcare or childcare policies. Within this context, and using complementary childcare as an example, it is therefore possible to take forward theoretical understandings about the dual nature of care involving emotional as well as physical dimensions, in particular, the theoretical proposition of the inseparability of care from the person providing it (Himmelweit 1995).



Therefore, this combined investigation of *what* childcare should provide and *who* would be considered an appropriate substitute childcarer, focuses primarily on the influence of collective values and norms in terms of a mother's 'proper' role, and on notions of socially and morally acceptable childcare which may take precedence over 'economic rationality' (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). However, it is also necessary to examine how these socio-cultural factors interact with economic and political factors such as the relatively high costs of childcare in the UK and the role of childcare policy in facilitating or obstructing how parents, especially mothers, make 'choices' about paid work and childcare (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004). This is particularly important in relation to the role of childcare as a constraint affecting the labour market careers of many women (Joshi 1991) (Ginn and Arber 1998).

To explore the family childcare relationship it is necessary to examine how both parents and grandparents, as the main providers of complementary childcare, respond to family obligation and duty (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999) and the role of reciprocity in 'exchanges' of family support (Arthur et al. 2003). Here it is also important to concentrate on notions of 'legitimacy' in relation to negotiations about childcare support and to explore perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable levels of support from the perspective of grandparents as well as parents. Related to this, a further important theoretical area to explore empirically is whether love and money can coexist in the family childcare relationship. With previous studies showing that grandparents are reluctant to take payment for complementary childcare (LaValle et al. 1999) (Wheelock and Jones 2002), it is essential to look at how these views relate to types of payment making the distinction between payment coming directly from parents, or via government allowances.

Finally, it is important to consider the policy implications of complementary childcare by exploring the interdependence of the formal and complementary sectors. In this case, exploring how the reliance of parents on the formal economy to provide a household income is balanced by the reliance of the formal economy on complementary childcare to allow parents to work. This requires analysis of the extent to which decisions are made collectively rather than individually and are embedded in the social institution of the household (Granovetter 1985). As parents' use of complementary childcare is an example of resource sharing in the form of contributions by non-resident family members, this also provides an opportunity to explore concepts of household boundaries as porous and permeable (Wheelock et al. 2003) (Oughton et al. 1997).



## Reader's Guide

Chapter 1 has established the importance of investigating complementary childcare as a dedicated area of research in terms of its contribution to the lives and livelihoods of parents and to the economy as a whole. Chapter 2 sets out a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. It begins by looking at the role of women in household provisioning as the main providers of non-market activities such as childcare in the home, increasingly combined with being financial providers as workers in the labour market. The overall theoretical framework is rooted in socialist-feminism, considering 'gendered structures of constraint' (Folbre 1994) as a way to represent the symbiotic relationship between women's disadvantaged position in the home and in the workplace. In particular, the analysis considers the progression of socially constructed gender ideologies which have contributed to notions of 'women's work' and which have especially reinforced the 'naturalness' of women as carers. This highlights the social and moral, as well as economic and political, constraints on women's 'choices' about work and childcare, analysed within the context of the different positions they hold in society. Through the theoretical concept of 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) different types of rationality in household decision-making are presented, moving beyond economic factors to consider the influence of the value system of mothers, defined by the collective values and norms into which they have been socialised. Central to this analysis is an exploration of concepts of care as these values are also intricately bound up with the nature of care itself, and beliefs about what it should provide (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983).

With links to ideologies of motherhood, this chapter also seeks to provide a theoretical basis for why family members provide so much complementary childcare, looking at theories of family obligation and expectation (Finch 1989) (Finch and Mason 1993). This is mainly concerned with expectations that a grandmother's care is the most 'natural' substitute for a mother's care, focusing on the gendered nature of care and the social and political reliance on women at an intergenerational level. These analyses are all considered within the context of the continued marginalisation of women because they are constructed as primary carers and the absence of an ethics of care framework (Tronto 1993) (Sevenhuijsen 1998). This provides the background for a theoretical discussion of whether payment for complementary (child)care would be 'entrapping rather than liberating' (Ungerson 1995) because of the low status of care in a society where it is consistently undervalued.

Chapter 3 presents the policy context for the study by providing a brief history of childcare policy in the UK, followed by policy developments during New Labour's first term from 1997 to 2002. The particular focus is the first ever National Childcare Strategy introduced in 1998. This is critically analysed in relation to the conflict between the aims of social investment in childcare and the promotion of mothers' employment (Lewis 2003) and the appropriateness of New Labour's mixed economy approach to childcare with high costs of private childcare in the UK presenting significant barriers to access for many parents and children. This chapter also brings childcare policy up-to-date by presenting recent childcare policy developments since 2002 in the form of the 'Ten year strategy for childcare' introduced in 2004 and which was, at time of writing, being formalised in the first ever 'Childcare Bill' (House of Commons 2005). These new developments are explored in the context of how this new strategy responded to criticisms and concerns of the initial National Childcare Strategy. However, the updates to childcare policy are also provided so that changes can be explored in relation to problems identified in this study of complementary childcare to consider how policies might still be failing UK parents and complementary childcarers.

Chapter 4 is in two parts. The first part navigates the complex and ongoing debates about methodology in social research which can obstruct yet also stimulate the creative process. This begins with a discussion of what constitutes 'knowledge'. Locating my 'positions' and views within these debates helped to guide the choice of methods for each stage of the study and address my ethical concerns about the role of the researcher in the research process. Part one also explores the methodological difficulties that were specific to this area of study, presenting an operational definition of complementary childcare and describing how decisions were made about 'who, what and where to study'. Having justified the choice of methods in part one, the second part of Chapter 4 describes how these methods were applied to carry out the study, providing a reflexive and chronological account describing the challenges faced at each stage and explaining how this has shaped and influenced the final 'product'. The chapter finishes with a discussion of interpretation and representation in data analysis, where the difficulties of combining data produced in different ways is considered, returning the discussion once again to questions of validity and certainty in the production of 'knowledge'.



Chapter 5 is the first of the empirical chapters, presenting data produced from the quantitative childcare survey. To demonstrate the stark socio-economic contrast between households randomly selected from the two city wards of Newcastle, household and livelihood characteristics are compared. Then, concentrating on three main types of households, 'full working' (with both parents in paid work), 'partially working' (where one parent is at home) and 'non-working' (households with no adult worker), the data is used to provide an overview of work and childcare patterns of the survey study households. This presents data of the various reasons childcare was being used, including social reasons and in cases of emergency and illness. It is in this chapter that vital statistical confirmation is provided illustrating the full extent to which working parents in the sample population relied on complementary childcare. Finally, this chapter also establishes which family members, friends or neighbours were providing regular, weekly childcare and presents original data on their working and living circumstances.

Chapter 6 presents data produced from three sources: the early focus group discussions with parents; the quantitative childcare survey; and interviews with parents and grandparents from the case study households. The theoretical and political framework presented in earlier chapters is used to analyse the interaction between social, economic and political factors that influenced how parents in the study selected their childcare. This chapter begins by looking at the impact of childcare as a constraint on decisions of mothers about whether they should go out to work in the first place. It then moves on to consider differences in parental preferences in terms of the perceived advantages or disadvantages of one-to-one childcare provided by an individual carer, or collective childcare environments such as day nurseries. This explores how parents developed their perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' childcare and the impact of these perceptions on childcare selection, especially for very young babies and toddlers. Data is also provided about the social and cultural factors which contributed to preferences for family childcare, while also exploring possible tensions between these preferences and parental guilt at relying so heavily on grandparents in particular. The chapter concludes by presenting the position of parents and grandparents in the study on the issue of whether or not complementary childcare should be paid.

Chapter 7 provides a unique insight into the family childcare relationship from the perspective of parents and grandparents from the case study households. The impact of 'family childcare' on inter-family relationships is analysed using theoretical models of family obligation and expectation about how families manage and negotiate the 'proper thing to do' (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999). In particular it is possible through this in-depth analysis of family childcare to take forward and develop concepts of the conditional nature of family support, and the notion of 'duty' as a fluid rather than static concept. The analysis in this chapter confirms the importance of a balanced view of family childcare by presenting data from the parents and grandparents about negative as well as positive aspects which influenced how each viewed 'acceptable' levels of family support.

The conclusions in Chapter 8 draw together the key empirical contributions of this study, in particular the unique comparative data on childcare used by parents living in different socio-economic circumstances and on the social and economic experiences of complementary childcarers. It also sets out the ways in which this study has carried forward and developed theoretical research of the nature of care as it relates to childcare. In particular, the importance of the person providing childcare, and the value parents place on the emotional aspects of childcare. This is linked to contributions made to other theoretical areas supporting 'gendered moral rationalities' as a more accurate description of how parents, mothers in particular, select their childcare highlighting the inadequacy of models of economic rationality in these situations. Policy implications are drawn out by considering ways in which UK childcare and employment policies could better support parents as they struggle to balance home and work. These include important lessons from this study about the implications of continuing to take-for-granted the substantial amount of what is assumed to be 'free' childcare provided by family members. In this context, short-term solutions are recommended to preserve the beneficial aspects of family childcare while working towards longer-term solutions to include recognition of the importance of care in general, and childcare in particular, as central to our 'moral boundaries' (Tronto 1993) and the need for care to be properly incorporated into our social and public policies.



## **Chapter 2: Theories and concepts**

To understand the nature and role of complementary childcare, it is necessary to analyse more closely the theoretical and conceptual development of a number of interrelated economic, social and political factors. From an economic perspective, childcare is a vital resource to allow parents (especially mothers) to work to sustain their livelihoods, while also contributing to the total economy by maintaining a supply of labour. However, from a social relationship perspective, the selection of childcare is also highly sensitive to subjective factors both socially and culturally defined which can override 'economic rationality' in favour of morally acceptable alternatives (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (Duncan et al. 2003) (Wheelock and Jones 2002). Furthermore, both the economic and the social aspects of childcare are influenced by macro structural factors such as government childcare policies which can also facilitate or constrain the process of childcare selection.

The aim of this chapter is to consider the theoretical debates within these areas and in doing so provide an 'analytical toolbox' to assess UK childcare and family policies in the following chapter and to assist with the analysis of data in later chapters. The overall theoretical framework is rooted in socialist-feminism, considering 'gendered structures of constraint' (Folbre 1994) that disadvantage women in both the home and the workplace. In the context of this study, the focus is women as mothers on whom the main responsibility for the care of children still lies despite their increased participation in paid work. Therefore, the analysis considers how a mother's social and economic position constrains 'choices' about the take-up of paid work (McRae 2003), particularly in terms of childcare 'options' (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004).

The concept of 'political motherhood' is used to consider the reliance on women at a political level by looking at the contradictory position of UK policymakers who have previously encouraged the socially constructed ideology of motherhood through low commitment to public childcare, therefore maintaining the traditional male breadwinner model of working father and stay-at-home mother. However, now that the UK Government is constructing women as workers rather than carers (Brannen 1999) it seems that the strength of traditional ideologies has become a difficult obstacle to overcome as no matter how women view their own employment<sup>1</sup>, those with children struggle to reconcile work with their personal identities of motherhood (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004). As these personal identities may also be key to understanding why many working mothers turn to grandmothers as acceptable 'substitute' childcarers<sup>2</sup>, the discussion is extended to include the role of other family women (grandmothers in particular) as main providers of complementary childcare. This explores the reliance on women at an intergenerational level by asking if there has been a shift towards 'political grandmotherhood' as "...a politically constructed necessity" (Eisenstein 1981, p. 15 cited in Borchorst 1990) on which the labour market and policymakers now rely.

The overall discussion is located within an overarching analysis of household provisioning in the wider context, which looks beyond the economic and therefore includes the caring and nurturing needs of households. This is especially relevant to the study of complementary childcare as an unpaid exchange of resources which contributes to household provisioning by making it financially feasible for parents to go out to work while providing a 'closeness' in terms of childcare that may also contribute to the social well-being of household members<sup>3</sup>. The role of women in household provisioning is the focus because of their increased contribution to economic provisioning which they have to combine with their domestic provisioning responsibilities. This discussion of women's dual-burden or 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989) further contributes to the discussion of the interrelationship between women's disadvantaged position in the home and the labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> How women view their own employment is explored later by considering constraints that limit 'choice' for some who would like to work and for others who would prefer to stay at home.

<sup>2</sup> As is evidenced in this study and confirmed in other childcare studies (Meltzer 1994) (Wheelock and Jones 2002) (LaValle et al. 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Social well-being aspects of complementary childcare are discussed in later chapters where parents describe the importance of emotional closeness between children and family childcarers.



Working within these core theoretical areas this chapter also provides a deconstruction of concepts such as 'the household', 'the family' and 'care' in an attempt to better understand the foundations of complementary childcare, provided at the household level, usually within a family relationship and which is influenced by particular perceptions of what constitutes 'good' (child)care. While all of these concepts are important, in terms of childcare selection and especially preferences for close family members such as grandmothers, a thorough analysis of the nature of care from a material and emotional perspective is particularly relevant. For this reason, there is a separate 'care' section which explores the proposition that care has a distinct and unique identity of its own, involving both 'labour' and 'love' (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983) (Gardiner 1997) (Thomas 1993) (Himmelweit 1995) (Folbre 1994). This includes a theoretical discussion of the issue of 'paying for care' with a focus on the moral and ethical social responsibility of care in society in the context of longer term, sustainable livelihoods and social reproduction (Ungerson 1995) (Tronto 1993) (Sevenhuijsen 1998) (Folbre 1994; Folbre 2001). This provides a basis for the policy discussion of payment for care in Chapter 3.

The last section focuses on concepts of household decision-making in relation to childcare selection by reflecting on the economic, social and political factors discussed and considering how these might influence parents as they decide who should look after their children when they themselves are not available. This is explored theoretically within the long-standing sociological debate about whether decisions at the household level are governed by the power of large institutionalised structures, the result of individual preference and agency or more realistically a complex interaction between both structure and agency (Wallace 2002) (Folbre 1994) (Kabeer 2000). In particular, the substantivist approach to decision making is explored, which acknowledges the embeddedness of economic behaviour within the social institution of the household (Granovetter 1985) (Swedberg 1998), using this to highlight the inadequacy of rational choice theory to describe the process of childcare selection. Therefore, 'rationality' is reconsidered to see how it could also accommodate socially motivated behaviour by recognising issues of gender and morality (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) in the form of 'purposeful choice' or 'choice action' (Folbre 1994).

However, to allow this overall discussion to proceed, there is a further important conceptual analysis to explore. The household is central to this study both quantitatively as the unit of analysis and qualitatively as the heart of relationship connections on which complementary childcare depends. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what constitutes the household in this study at a conceptual level which in turn forms the basis for the operational definition presented in later chapters.

## Conceptualising the household

A household cannot be simply viewed as a statistical or physical unit of co-residentiality, but must be seen as a set of changing social relations which establish a set of mutual obligations (basically, a reciprocal form of social organisation) aimed at helping its members to survive. (Mingione 1991, pp. 132)

We are looking for the basic social unit of society, a unit whose boundary is formed by common agreement on the management of resources...the household may be characterised by individuals with very different relationships, kin or no-kin depending upon the specific context. (Oughton et al. 1997, pp. 42)

The task of conceptualising what constitutes 'the household' is not unproblematic as this single term has to encapsulate so many different aspects and dimensions of what is meant by the household (Mingione 1991). A change in demographic structures has resulted in a revised definition of the household for official purposes, recognising that the conventional 'nuclear family' is only one of many different types of households<sup>4</sup>. However, there has been little acknowledgement, especially by policymakers in the UK, of the close interaction between households at a social and an economic level and there continues to be a fixed definition of household boundaries and resource-sharing which assumes co-residency. Unfortunately, this assumption ignores the actual behaviour of households and in order to represent accurately the households in this study, this requires a conceptual and operational definition that moves beyond this narrow focus.

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<sup>4</sup> The UK 2001 population census defined the household as: 'a single person or a group of people who have the address as their only or main residence and who either share one meal a day or share the living accommodation.' (Source: Appendix A 'Living in Britain' 2002 Report) – see online at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/lib2002/downloads/appendices.pdf>.



The two definitions at the beginning of this section provide a more realistic view of the household by first acknowledging that household members may or may not be related by birth or marriage. However, while expanding the definition of the household, it is not the intention to isolate it from the social networks in which it is embedded (Mingione 1991, pp. 132). Therefore, it is accepted that many households are formed because of kinship or family relationships, a connection so closely linked that the terms 'family' and 'household' are often used interchangeably (Morgan 1996)<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, it is important to clarify the distinction between family and household and to do so it has been suggested that the household be seen in terms of function and resource-pooling which can be based on either family or non-family relationships (Oughton et al. 1997). Therefore, an important aspect of the conceptual definition of the household used throughout this study is that family connection of household members through birth or marriage is not a prerequisite when considering contributions to the household unit<sup>6</sup>.

While identifying the household as a 'provisioning unit' this is not restricted to economic resources but instead includes the social well-being and caring function of the household, therefore it is also conceptualised as a 'caring unit'<sup>7</sup>. The caring function of the household is particularly important in the context of this study as complementary childcare is a resource which contributes to caring as well as the financial provisioning of the household which is most often provided by family members (mainly grandparents) living elsewhere. Consequently, acknowledging that household provisioning cuts across physical household boundaries is another vital aspect of the conceptual definition presented here. This view recognises that the boundaries of the household are flexible and porous and that contributions from non-residents are often an integral part of household provisioning<sup>8</sup> (Mackintosh 2000) (Wheelock et al. 2003) (Oughton et al. 1997).

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<sup>5</sup> The interrelationship between the conceptual trilogy of 'family', 'household' and 'home' is developed more fully later in this chapter because of the importance of these concepts to the analysis of data which focuses on family identity and belonging as an integral factor in childcare selection.

<sup>6</sup> This may seem at odds with the focus of this study of complementary childcare which evidence will show is primarily rooted in family relationships. However, it is important to recognise that both family and non-family members may be contributing to the household unit.

<sup>7</sup> See also Jean Gardiner (Gardiner 2000) who suggests a useful way forward would be to refocus on theorising households as care providers because of the centrality of care-giving work in domestic labour and gender divisions.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, especially in times of economic change and financial insecurity, the study will show that for some parents, household provisioning may depend entirely on the decision of a grandparent about whether or not they will care for the children, free of charge, to allow the parents to go out to work.

In summary, the household is defined as a social and economic unit consisting of individuals who may or may not be related by birth or marriage, or even living in the same 'house'. However, all of these individuals participate in decisions about the distribution of unpaid, non-marketed activities in the private domain of the home and paid market activities in the public domain of the formal economy. Furthermore, all individuals contribute in some way to household provisioning by supplying vital resources. Therefore, the household is the centre for important decision-making, acting as a boundary or interface between the complementary (or informal) and the formal sectors (Wheelock 1994; Wheelock 1996) to ensure that households are able to survive economically and reproduce themselves socially. The household is also where socio-cultural, economic and political pressures intersect and in reaching decisions about the allocation of these highly interdependent non-market and market activities, the household (in its extended form) faces a number of challenges. The following sections look more closely at gender related and socio-cultural factors which influence decisions about work and childcare in particular and in doing so allow further reflection on the role of complementary childcare in the total provisioning process.

## **Women's roles in household provisioning**

Most households, especially those with children, have both adult men and women who contribute to household provisioning. Traditionally, market activities in the formal sector, such as participation in the labour market to provide a household income, were performed by men and the non-marketed activities within the informal sector, mainly involving ways of self-providing 'within' the household to provide for domestic and caring requirements, were carried out by women. However, as more women, especially mothers, enter the labour market, there is an increasing 'care and domestic deficit' (Hochschild 2003) leaving gaps in household provisioning that have to be filled. These activities are essential not only at the household level, but also for the total economy as labour market production activities in the formal sector would not be able to function without the complex social organisation of domestic and caring work in the home to maintain paid workers and to reproduce the next generation (Sen 1990) (Bruegel et al. 1998).



This highlights the importance of women to the provisioning process and when household provisioning is viewed in the wider context to include the social well-being of household members, the significance of women becomes even more apparent. While in economics, it is normal practice to measure well-being in terms of material assets and 'standard of living', this ignores the vital non-economic and non-material factors that are necessary for humans to flourish and have a 'sense' of well-being (Dawson 1998) (Radin 1996) (Himmelweit 1999) (Wheelock et al. 2003). This is closely connected to the relational aspects of household provisioning and highlights the role of gender in this process as it is women who are most often constructed as the providers of emotional support and care (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983) (Gardiner 1997).

With women's role in household provisioning as the focus, the aim in this section is to consider women's dual position in the home and labour market in order to explore factors which influence decisions about childcare and work. To understand more fully why working women continue to carry the responsibility for domestic and caring activities, or in the case of complementary childcare hand over this responsibility to other (mainly family) women, it is important to look at the social and structural forces which have contributed to the construction of 'women's work'. This involves an analysis of the interrelationship between women's position in the home and the labour market, considering how the consequences of the 'dual-burden' leave women disadvantaged in both domains.

### ***Women's position in the home***

To explore women's position in the home and the construction of domestic activities as 'women's work', it is necessary to reflect on powerful socio-cultural factors which have reinforced gender ideologies and which are now deeply entrenched in the social structures of our society. At the risk of going over extremely old ground, the Domestic Labour Debate of the 1970s, when the taken-for-granted role of women in the home was challenged seriously for the first time, provides a solid basis for exploring the development of research that has focused on gender inequalities in domestic labour. This Marxist-feminist led debate was prompted by the introduction of New Household Economics which acknowledged the vital role of unpaid, domestic work in supporting the production process (Becker 1965) (Mincer 1962).

While feminists welcomed this recognition, they also criticised the approach for maintaining a traditional perspective explaining the division of labour in terms of a 'different but equal' exchange of rights and duties<sup>9</sup>. Feminists argued that this view ignored the disadvantages to women of specialising in domestic work in terms of loss of employment skills and opportunities. Furthermore, it also paid little attention to the low status of domestic work in relation to paid work highlighting the gendered imbalance of power within the household and the extent to which 'women's work' was, and remains, systematically undervalued (Bruegel et al. 1998).

The Domestic Labour Debate was instrumental in more accurately representing the unpaid and 'hidden' domestic activities carried out by women in the home and for developing a conceptualisation of these activities as a form of work or labour that deserved recognition in its own right. While there have also been feminist criticisms<sup>10</sup>, the contribution of the Domestic Labour Debate cannot be underestimated for providing direction for feminist theoretical and empirical research to reveal inequalities, and calling for the analysis of households and markets as interrelated but distinct sectors of the economy (Gardiner 2000). It is the development of the debate and the refinement of arguments through feminist research that has led to a greater understanding of gendered power relationships, patriarchal structures and the interaction between gender and class in terms of women's disadvantaged position<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> New Household Economics used the theory of comparative advantage to explain household divisions of paid and unpaid work focusing on utility maximisation whereby household members specialise in functions for which they are best suited in the interests of economic efficiency. This theory, supported by psychological models of women's 'natural' predisposition to care, concludes that it makes 'rational' sense for women to concentrate on domestic and caring work in the home and for men to work in the labour market as breadwinners.

<sup>10</sup> For a review of the outcomes and achievements, as well as the limitations of the Domestic Labour Debate see Gardiner 1997 and Gardiner 2000.

<sup>11</sup> See Heidi Hartmann from 1979 on the network of patriarchal social structures and Sylvia Walby from 1986 in developing the dual concept of public and private patriarchy. In terms of gender and class, it has also been suggested that the Marxist led Domestic Labour Debate's overemphasis on capitalism and class and focus on the maintenance of the adult male worker, ironically overlooked gender inequalities (Gardiner 2000). The unresolved debate about the analysis of gender and class as separate or unified systems of stratification and inequality, will be discussed later in this chapter.



Furthermore, by acknowledging domestic activities as a form of work, this has led to further scrutiny of these activities highlighting the inappropriate use of the Marxist model of exploitation of waged labour as an analytical tool for unpaid, domestic labour. By looking more closely at all aspects of domestic labour, it has been possible to show that certain activities such as caring and nurturing which involve emotional and interpersonal relationships, do not fit neatly into the socially constructed notion of 'work' which is normally associated with capitalist waged labour (Himmelweit 2000). The recognition that caring activities required specific consideration resulted in a separate 'care literature' which has continued to provide much needed insight into the gendered nature of care<sup>12</sup>.

Of particular importance within this analysis is the critical role of motherhood in the construction of the female identity, something which is widely accepted whether considering the formation of gender identities from a psychological, biological or political perspective. However, as childcare and the role of the state through childcare policy are central to this study, then the structuralist view of motherhood is particularly relevant. 'Political motherhood' sees the construction of women as 'natural' childcarers (in addition to their role as biological childbearers) as a political necessity to maintain most patriarchal-capitalist societies (Eisenstein 1981; Eisenstein 1983 cited in Borchorst 1990). While it has been argued that this view overemphasises exploitation and ignores the positive aspects of motherhood (Borchorst 1990), it must be acknowledged that keeping women in the home as childcarers has previously been politically advantageous to certain types of welfare regimes<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, as the reality of motherhood is that caring for children requires a great deal of housework, it has been suggested that motherhood has had a crucial role in the construction of *all* domestic labour as 'women's work' (Oakley 1974) (Eisenstein 1983). Therefore, the political advantage of supporting an ideology of motherhood has wider implications in terms of reproduction of the next generation of workers but also in the production process by ensuring the domestic needs of male workers are met.

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<sup>12</sup> The care literature is analysed separately later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> See the following chapter for an analysis of welfare regimes and approaches to childcare policy.

Considering 'political motherhood' in today's society, with ever increasing numbers of women (especially mothers) participating in paid work, then it might be expected that the political aspects of motherhood would be less powerful in determining women's actions and certainly less desirable to policymakers who now want to encourage the integration of women into the workforce. However, while women have gained some independence through employment, they have also retained the bulk of responsibility for the care of children and domestic labour. It has been suggested, therefore, that rather than seeing a serious reduction in 'political motherhood', it has emerged in a new form<sup>14</sup> (Borchorst 1990). The argument is that women still face the social and political pressures of an ideology of motherhood but now they have to combine this with work in a male-orientated labour market where there is little political support in terms of the increased participation of men in domestic and caring activities. The result is that women are now coping with a dual-burden and this is at the root of their disadvantaged position.

Looking at the wider society and the ideology of motherhood, attitudes have changed over the last two decades showing less support for the traditional view that mothers should stay home with their children (Hinds and Jarvis 2000)<sup>15</sup>. However, this appears to be more about accepting women as workers rather than a change in attitudes about who should be caring for children. Psychological theories advocating the importance of maternal care to children's development during their formative years (Bowlby 1953)<sup>16</sup>, remains strongly influential, reinforcing socially constructed gender roles. Therefore, while it is becoming more acceptable for women to work, it seems they must also retain responsibility not just for the physical care of their children, but also their emotional and psychological development.

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<sup>14</sup> In this thesis I also consider 'political motherhood' in the form of reliance on other family women (grandmothers). This is discussed later in this chapter and in later chapters.

<sup>15</sup> The traditional view that men should go out to work while mothers stay home was still held by 41% of British people in 1984. In 1998 this had diminished substantially and was held by only one in six women and one in five men (Hinds and Jarvis 2000).

<sup>16</sup> John Bowlby developed 'attachment theory' in the 1950s, claiming that a child's personality development is achieved through a close relationship with his mother and if this attachment is not formed then this has a devastating effect on a child's development.



It is little wonder then, that many women experience severe guilt when leaving their children to go out to work (Cooper and Lewis 1993) something which is exacerbated by studies that focus on mothers employment and the negative long-term effects especially on educational attainment (Ermisch and Francesconi 2000)<sup>17</sup>. Faced with this additional pressure, women's anxiety is understandable when it is a mother who is most likely to be held accountable if a child does not succeed<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, this provides further insight into the nature of women's dual-burden and the demands on women to become 'supermums' who it seems are expected to do it all.

As women struggle with the demands of the dual-burden, the inequity of divisions of domestic labour become even more evident and prompts the question of why socially constructed gender identities remain so strongly influential in light of changing patterns of work and employment? Attempts to address this question have highlighted the mismatch between the very rapid rate at which women have been incorporated into the workplace, which has not been balanced by a shift in attitudes or beliefs about traditional gender roles. Work in the early 1990s provided some insight into where the dual-burden might lead in terms of 'changing roles' with the suggestion that the strain of the dual-burden, and the resultant conflict within the household, would produce a slow, incremental change in the divisions of domestic labour through a process of generational 'lagged adaptation' (Gershuny et al. 1994). However, a decade on and it seems women are still caught in a 'stalled gender revolution', resulting in what Arlie Hochschild has called the 'gender lag'<sup>19</sup> to describe the dilemma faced by women struggling between 'new' rules at work and 'old' feelings at home (Hochschild 2003).

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<sup>17</sup> Ermisch and Francesconi's results, published in 2000, found a negative and significant effect on a child's educational attainment for children aged 0-5 years if their mother worked full-time. The effect was smaller if the mother worked part-time.

<sup>18</sup> Studies tend to focus entirely on a mothers presence or absence in the home when evaluating the effect on children's development.

<sup>19</sup> Arlie Hochschild uses this term in her analysis of William Ogburn's 'culture lag'. She claims that the emphasis on 'culture' obscures the role of male power and interest and that 'culture lag' in wider society echoes a 'gender lag' in the home in terms of behaviour and attitudes (Hochschild 2003, pp. 106-107).



The contradictions of these push and pull factors<sup>20</sup> (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995) and the tenacity of 'old' feelings is understandable when it is considered that people are socialised into their roles from childhood. Therefore, while time availability and some level of economic rationality are also influential<sup>21</sup>, traditional gendered divisions of domestic labour can often prove too difficult to resist, even in households where a domestic egalitarian approach would be expected, such as dual-career households where both partners work in professional occupations (Gregson and Lowe 1993). However, it is the construction of women as the main providers of care where the socialisation process has been particularly powerful. 'Coercive socialisation' is a term used to describe situations where women face criticism or in some cases social ostracism if they do not adhere to societal expectations of a 'proper' mother, wife or daughter (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998). It is argued that coercive socialisation can be so persuasive in terms of caring activities that women begin to subscribe willingly and 'voluntarily' to their assigned role, believing they are ultimately responsible for that care (Tronto 1987) (Land and Rose 1985) (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998).

This process of 'internalising' assigned roles may also help to explain the paradox created by studies which show women's high levels of satisfaction with the division of domestic labour, despite the clear inequity of workload in favour of men (Baxter 2000) (Baxter and Western 1998)<sup>22</sup>. This adds a further dimension to inequality and provides more insight into the strength of gender ideologies and identities. If women are dealing with situations over which they feel they have little control by defining them as satisfactory, or find the avoidance of constant conflict and discord within their relationship more desirable than striving for an equal sharing of domestic labour (Baxter 2000)<sup>23</sup>, then this presents further challenges for the possibility of redefining gender roles.

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<sup>20</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim refer to the way in which new strains put upon women's lives creates a situation where they are "pulled back and forth, by this contradiction between liberation from and reconnection to the old ascribed roles." (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, pp. 111, quoted in Smart and Neale 1999)

<sup>21</sup> The fact that men are usually able to earn more money and therefore work longer hours, making it more economically feasible that women reduce their hours to do more domestic labour, is a circular argument for why women are in this disadvantaged position in the first place. This is discussed in more detail in the 'Women's position in the labour market' section below.

<sup>22</sup> Baxter and Western (1998), using data from an Australian national survey, found that levels of satisfaction were significantly related to gender role attitudes and therefore women who held traditional beliefs that domestic work is a women's responsibility, had the highest levels of satisfaction. However, for most women the key was having 'help', and they were prepared to put up with the inequity of the situation as long as men did at least some 'women's work'.

<sup>23</sup> In later work on fairness, Baxter theorised that women may not want to admit to the 'unfairness' of the divisions of domestic labour because then they have to face issues of satisfaction with their relationship raising concerns about the impact on marital quality and stability (Baxter 2000).



It also raises issues about how we should be approaching fairness for women and men in society in terms of striving for 'gender equality' or celebrating 'gender difference'<sup>24</sup>. While those advocating 'gender equality' consider the promotion of gender differences as obstructive to socio-economic equality, gender difference theorists feel women should be proud of their different concepts of self, relationships and morality. The problem, they say, is that society as a whole undervalues the activities associated with these gender differences (especially caring activities). In an attempt to merge these concepts, others have highlighted their interdependence, stating that *equality* can only be achieved if *difference* is more highly valued and this includes not just gender, but all forms of difference (or inequality) such as class, culture and ethnicity (Rhode 1989, cited in Doucet 1995)<sup>25</sup>.

Unfortunately, while working towards an ideal world where the celebration of difference could lead to greater equality, the question must be asked, 'what difference does difference make?' (Rhode 1990 cited in Doucet 1995) in order to consider the consequences of difference which leads to disadvantage. As long as domestic and caring work continues to be undervalued then women's commitment to these roles, even if viewed as a positive *difference* between the values and morality of women and men, will inevitably lead to disadvantage especially in a male orientated model of paid employment against which women's success is constantly measured (Hochschild 2003)<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, women's position in the home, and their vital contribution to the unpaid activities required in household provisioning, makes it very difficult for them to compete on a 'level playing field' with men in the labour market (Ginn et al. 1996). The constraints they face when trying to balance home (particularly the care of their children) and work and the objective disadvantageous consequences of the dual-burden in terms of their short-term and long-term economic independence, is the subject of the following section.

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<sup>24</sup> Andrea Doucet provides a useful review of these two concepts in feminist theory, looking at gender equality in terms of 'equal rights' and 'equal treatment' feminism and gender difference using 'special treatment theorists' and 'relational feminism' (Doucet 1995).

<sup>25</sup> So far, the discussion of structural constraints has focused on gender inequalities and this is particularly relevant for a study of childcare because childbearing and childrearing continue to constrain women's lives more so than men's lives. However, as discussed earlier, there are other collective identities which interact with gender and act as constraints or opportunities in terms of equality, such as class, age, race or ethnicity. For the purposes of this study, social and cultural positions associated with class are also particularly relevant and these are discussed later in this chapter in relation to women's position in the labour market.

<sup>26</sup> This pressure for women to conform to a male orientated model of employment while retaining their caring roles, is at the root of the problem of polarisation between women's and men's position in the labour market. There have been suggestions for ways forward requiring cultural and ethical shifts in society as a whole towards an ethics of care framework and this will be discussed later in this chapter (Crompton and Harris 1998) (Tronto 1993) (Sevenhuijsen 1998).



### ***Women's position in the labour market***

Having established the persistent inequality in divisions of domestic labour and the strength of gender roles and identities which maintain women's position in the home, it is important to analyse the impact this has on their position in the labour market. The close relationship between women's domestic and labour market roles has been extensively studied and it is widely acknowledged that women hold a more vulnerable and objectively disadvantageous position in the workplace than men (Martin and Roberts 1984) (Joshi 1991) (Brannen et al. 1994) (Ginn and Arber 1998). Discontinuous employment and a requirement for part-time work to accommodate caring and domestic responsibilities have channelled women into a narrow segment of the labour market dominated by low status, poorly paid jobs. This creates a vicious circle of disadvantage which reinforces traditional roles as women who cannot earn as much as their partners are more likely to change their employment or reduce their hours when children are born (Brannen and Moss 1991). This usually means employment in the secondary sector, which increases job segregation and the gender pay gap, which leads to discontinuous employment and part-time work and so the cycle continues. The result is that women's short-term and long-term financial independence continues to be compromised affecting access to employment in later life which then affects their ability to qualify for state pensions or contribute to occupational pensions (Ginn and Arber 1993) (Ginn and Arber 1998) (Ginn 2001).

While these gender inequalities in the labour market are not disputed, there is, however, disagreement among those analysing women's employment as to why they are in this disadvantaged position. One perspective has focused almost entirely on women's agency, implying that women have placed themselves willingly into this position because of life style choices that prioritise domestic and caring activities therefore resulting in a less committed attitude to employment than men (Hakim 1995) (Hakim 2000). On the other hand, others have acknowledged that women are not competing equally with men as they face gender specific socio-cultural and structural constraints that restrict their employment 'choices' (Fagan and Rubery 1996) (Ginn et al. 1996) (Himmelweit 2001) (McRae 2003).



Catherine Hakim has been the main advocate of the 'willing victims' perspective, promoting her theoretical position that in the 'new scenario' of modern advanced societies, women have genuine choice between a career and motherhood. The central theme of Preference Theory, which she has developed to support this position, is that preferences and lifestyle choices now take precedence over constraints or opportunities (Hakim 2000). She offers three categories which describe women's work orientation. These are, 'home-centred' which accounts for 20 per cent of the female population, 'work-centred' which accounts for a further 20 per cent and a catch-all category of 'adaptives' which accounts for the 60 per cent middle majority<sup>27</sup>. She goes on to suggest that,

The unpalatable truth is that a substantial proportion of women still accept the sexual division of labour which sees homemaking as women's *principal* activity and income-earning as men's *principal* activity in life. (Hakim 1996. pp. 179, original emphasis).

It follows, therefore, that many women are happy to take a 'back seat' concerning their own employment and prefer to take jobs with little or no responsibility. In relation to part-time work, she claims that this is chosen voluntarily by women to give priority to non-market activities, suggesting feminists have been misguided in thinking that part-time work is an unwilling choice forced on women.

Understandably, there are sociologists and economists who work in the area of women's employment who have challenged this theoretical position (Fagan and Rubery 1996) (Ginn et al. 1996) (Bruegel 1996) (Crompton and Harris 1998) (McRae 2003). The main thrust of the counter-argument is that Hakim's explanation of the persistence of gender inequality in employment shows a complete lack of interest in how preferences, choices and priorities are formed and developed (Bruegel 1996). For example, many women may prefer part-time work, but this has to be considered in the context of the persistent gender role ideologies whereby women are compelled to take responsibility for domestic and caring activities which inevitably constrains and limits their decisions about employment (Ginn et al. 1996).

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<sup>27</sup> These categories were further developed in response to the much criticised 'committed' and 'non-committed' categories she previously used, replacing the old term of 'drifters' to describe women who come in and out the workplace, with the new 'adaptives' category to describe women who may want a career and a family life.

Hakim has answered these criticisms claiming she does pay attention to social and economic structural factors but, in her opinion, in modern society they have only a 'relative weight' (original emphasis) and they are declining as lifestyle choices grow (Hakim 2000, pp. 17)<sup>28</sup>. The 'weight' she gives to this issue is demonstrated by the fact that her discussion is relegated to an endnote in her 'feminist myths' article<sup>29</sup> which appears oblivious to the different social, cultural and economic situational positions of women. Women who feel socially coerced into fulfilling their 'natural' motherhood role by staying home or reducing their hours despite a desire to work and have a career, or those who are 'forced' to return to work because of economic necessity when they would have preferred to stay home, are unlikely to view these situations as unconstrained lifestyle choices<sup>30</sup>.

By disregarding these 'no choice' situations, the suggestion is that *all* women are in a similar position to overcome obstacles and constraints and therefore have the luxury of options from which to choose. But women are not a homogenous group and while they may share a collective gender identity, and therefore face sexual inequalities because of that position, there are other differences that separate women as a group, leaving some more disadvantaged than others. Therefore, when reconsidering the question 'what difference does difference makes', as well as gender, other collective identities that contribute to structures of constraint, such as social class, must also be acknowledged (Folbre 1994)<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> This view that 'lifestyle choices' will replace structural constraints ignores the fact that lifestyle choices are in fact constrained by social and structural factors such as consumerism which can serve to 'trap' people into a particular lifestyle which requires a certain level of income, therefore influencing 'choices' about paid employment (Hochschild 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Here she focuses on the debate that part-time work disadvantages women and dismisses these constraints as not relevant to sex discrimination as there is no evidence that they are any worse for full or part-time workers. She also states that she would expect these barriers to be more important to women working full-time who are seeking to climb the career ladder (Hakim 1995, endnote 5).

<sup>30</sup> The analysis of data from this study provides examples of 'no choice' or 'only option' situations – see also Sue Himmelweit's recent work about women's decisions about work and childcare (Himmelweit 2001).

<sup>31</sup> The focus here on the effects of gender and class over other collective identities such as ethnicity, is not intended to imply a false hierarchy of structural constraints or opportunities, as disadvantage or privilege is the result of the interaction between various collective identities which shape the lives of individuals. However, in this study, there was very little data with which to explore the impact of ethnicity, as the study population was almost entirely White British because of the demographic composition of the wards studied (see Chapter 4). Therefore, ethnicity was not a key variable for the purposes of analysis.



In the context of the study presented here, the 'reproduction of class', in terms of inherited social and cultural differences and access to material assets, which can lead to either disadvantage or privilege depending on the social group people are born into, is particularly important<sup>32</sup>. The 'self-maintaining properties' (Goldthorpe 2000, pp. 191) of social class continue to influence individual life histories, particularly in relation to educational attainment and access to well-paid employment. This has an impact on women with children in the material sense for example in terms of their ability to pay for childcare should they want it.

Also of importance to childcare selection is the 'circular causality' of how children are raised, whereby certain beliefs influence childrearing practices that reproduce class identities while simultaneously class continues to reinforce these attitudes and practices (Morgan 1996, pp. 45). These inherited class attitudes and values are strongly influential and difficult to resist because as social 'conditions of existence', they produce a way of being that is passed on and internalised in the early socialisation process as a 'second nature' (Bourdieu 1999a)<sup>33</sup>. The result is taken-for-granted individual and collective practices which produce a correctness of behaviour based on the 'internal laws' (social values and norms) of the social class of origin (Bourdieu 1999a) (Thompson 1997)<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, looking beyond the material aspects, class is more than what job we do, where we live, how we speak or even how we are educated. Instead it is,

...something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being. (Kuhn 1995, pp 98, cited in Skeggs 1997).

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<sup>32</sup> The aim of this thesis is not an in-depth class analysis of childcare behaviour, but rather an exploration of how parents with very different socio-economic positions manage their work and childcare. Therefore, in this study social class is explored along the lines of access to material assets while acknowledging the important qualitative aspects of social class which shape social values and norms. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the methodological difficulties of class stratification.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu described this internalised socialisation process as development of the 'habitus'.

<sup>34</sup> This is not to suggest that this is a static process and each generation may adapt, develop and adopt new practices (Brannen 2003). However, the power of class at the origin (the habitus) can make it very difficult to resist the pressure of class and family cultures (Bourdieu 1999a).

This acknowledgement of the importance of a qualitative understanding of the subjective class experience, and recognition of the extreme difficulties in accurately measuring class position, does not ignore the value of having some means by which to divide the population for the purposes of analysis. The only practical way to do this is to use classifications based on external, material factors which reveal the marked inequalities that exist in modern society. At a conceptual level, Bourdieu's distribution of forms of capital (Bourdieu 1983) is a useful framework for looking at how these material and social assets are developed and interact providing a way of "...understanding power and exchange in the reproduction of inequality." (Skeggs 1997, pp. 12).

Women who occupy different inherited social spaces have different levels of access to social, cultural, economic and symbolic 'capitals' which significantly affect their capacity to overcome constraints. For some women, the social structure of their class of origin produces a cycle of poor educational qualifications and sub-standard housing, which in turn limits access to well paid employment reducing their viable options and aspirations in terms of 'choice' between career or motherhood. On the other hand, women whose circumstances are such that their access to these resources increases their chances of overcoming constraints, therefore producing a wider range of viable options, may appear to be living 'as if' they had no constraints (McRae 2003, pp. 329). Therefore, the importance of class position in the material sense (affecting access to resources), and in the subjective sense (in terms of inherited cultural values about socially and morally acceptable forms of behaviour) is hard to ignore.

However, while constraints may be less visible for women who have the capacity to overcome them, this is very different from the implication that collectively women have genuine, unconstrained choice. This is especially so when gender and class interact as structural constraints<sup>35</sup> influencing decisions about home and work for most women. Therefore, women who 'choose' career over motherhood, or vice versa, cannot be seen to be doing so devoid of external and internal constraints (Pungello and Kurz-Costes 2000) (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004) which inevitably affect their position in the home and the labour market.

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<sup>35</sup> This focus on structural determinism is not intended to ignore the role of the 'individual' but to highlight that gender and class position, which affects access to material assets, significantly impacts on the power of individual agency.



### ***Childcare: constraint or 'choice'?***

Childcare is a particularly good example of how external and internal constraints interact in the lives of women and, in the context of this study, how this affects the selection of formal or complementary childcare. Childcare, as the result of external factors such as childcare policies and access to economic resources, is in itself a structural constraint which reduces the options available to women. At the same time, childcare is also subject to internal or normative constraints such as a woman's sense of identity as a mother (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004) (McRae 2003) as well as the attitudes of other family members about gender roles and responsibilities as part of the intergenerational transmission of social values (Thompson 1997). It is because of these two aspects of childcare that there has also been disagreement about whether childcare is a constraint or 'choice' in terms of women's position in the home and the labour market.

In relation to objective consequences on women's discontinuous work histories and subsequent downward occupational mobility<sup>36</sup>, childbearing and childrearing is recognised as a main contributor to women's lower potential earnings in the short and long term (Martin and Roberts 1984) (Joshi 1991) (Ward et al. 1996) (Brannen and Moss 1991)<sup>37</sup>. However, once again the disagreement is over whether women willingly place themselves in this position because of their 'preferences' for motherhood (Hakim 1995) (Hakim 2000), or whether it is the situational and structural constraints associated with childcare that places them in this disadvantaged position affecting employment choices (Ginn et al. 1996) (Ward et al. 1996) (McRae 2003).

Catherine Hakim argues that the emphasis on access to childcare as a factor preventing the up-take of employment by women is a 'feminist myth' and states that because of access to effective contraception,

Childcare problems are in a sense chosen by women who choose to have large families, a less reversible decision than most employment choices. (Hakim 1995, pp. 438).

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<sup>36</sup> As discussed in the previous section on 'Women's position in the labour market'.

<sup>37</sup> This is particularly apparent when mothers (especially those with pre-school children) are compared to women who do not have dependent children who are almost twice as likely to be in paid employment and have higher earnings (Thair and Risdon 1999).

In her 'feminist myths' article, her 'evidence' that childcare is not a main barrier to women who want to (re)enter the labour market is based on research from the USA estimating only a 10 per cent increase in women's participation if universal, no-cost childcare were available (Hakim 1995, pp. 437)<sup>38</sup>. However, types of childcare are highly relevant here, as this research focuses entirely on the take-up of formal childcare provision. Once again, values and beliefs about *who* is appropriate as a substitute childcarer are ignored, as are bad experiences or negative perceptions about formal childcare such as day nurseries or childminders which may prevent consideration of using this type of childcare, especially for very young children. Therefore, access to childcare has to be viewed not just in the context of affordability, but also in relation to the perceived social and moral consequences for mothers, which frame notions of 'acceptability' (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). It is these combined constraints that produce 'no choice' or 'no option' situations, supporting the suggestion that even where women have similar 'preferences' in relation to work-orientation or home-centredness (Hakim 2000), it is their ability to overcome external and internal constraints that determines their labour market careers (McRae 2003).

By viewing childcare in the context of socio-cultural as well as economic factors, this also provides further insight into why some parents might favour complementary childcare over formal childcare provision. While households are increasingly encouraged to meet any caring or domestic deficit through the market (Folbre 1994) (Himmelweit 1995) (Esping-Anderson 1999)<sup>39</sup> in what Arlie Hochschild has called the 'commercialisation of intimate life' (Hochschild 2003), it must be recognised that this might not be what households want especially when selecting childcare. Therefore, while it may not matter so much who cleans the house or washes the clothes, it appears to matter a great deal to most parents who looks after their children as there will always be some aspects of (child)care that are imperfectly or 'incompletely commodified' (Radin 1996) (Himmelweit 2002)<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> The impact of subsidising childcare is far more complex than implied, requiring analysis of the interaction between childcare demand and take-up and childcare hours which have both direct and indirect effects on labour market participation depending on the age of the child (Duncan et al. 1995).

<sup>39</sup> There is evidence that paid for domestic work is becoming more commonplace, especially in dual-career households, but this is usually seen as a way of reducing 'women's work' (Gregson and Lowe 1993).

<sup>40</sup> While appreciating the limitations of the commodification of childcare, it is not the intention here to imply that cost is unimportant and for parents who would consider formal childcare but have limited access to financial resources, cost is an additional serious constraint. This is discussed in later chapters in relation to the polarisation of women in the labour market.



When the impact of gender ideologies and personal identities of motherhood are explored as important underlying social structural constraints then it is more understandable why mothers in particular may only feel comfortable with childcare if it coincides with a family relationship. Turning to a close family member (especially a grandmother) for childcare, as the 'next best thing' (Wheelock and Jones 2002) to a mother, may be preferable because it helps to overcome social and moral as well as economic constraints<sup>41</sup>. This is intricately linked to notions of what childcare should provide in terms of emotional as well physical care within the context of a loving relationship which is normally associated with family or kinship. To understand why childcare selection is so sensitive to social and cultural pressure and why family play such an important role in complementary childcare requires a more in-depth analysis of the complex conceptualisation of the nature of care.

## **The nature of care: concepts and debates**

The recognition that 'care' is a unique and distinct domestic activity requiring separate investigation has resulted in a growing literature in which feminists have struggled to define care and represent the role of women as primary carers. The problems arise because while care is often based on love and affection, it also involves physical activities such as feeding, washing and cleaning. The danger from a feminist perspective is that acknowledgement of the 'labour' is often neglected in favour of romanticising the 'love' therefore obscuring the potentially exploitative elements of care (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983) (Waerness 1984) (Thomas 1993). This places women in a precarious position as the emotional aspects which are increasingly taking precedence<sup>42</sup> and are most often preferred, are synonymous with care provided by women in the home where intimate relationships are based (Graham 1983). The dilemma for feminists, therefore, is how to maintain the relational elements of care that make it unique, while finding ways to prevent the marginalisation of women who are most likely to be constrained by the physical as well as the emotional demands of care. These issues are best analysed in the debate about whether all care should be defined as 'work' (Himmelweit 1995) (Graham 1983), and whether care provided by family and friends should be paid (Ungerson 1995) (Land 2002b).

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<sup>41</sup> See below for a discussion of gendered moral rationalities in relation to household decision-making.

<sup>42</sup> See Jean Gardiner (Gardiner et al. 2000) for the role of advances in domestic technologies which have placed even more emphasis on the emotional aspects of care.

## Concepts of care

In trying to understand the nature of care and especially when considering whether care should be conceptualised as work, care theorists have searched for a language to distinguish the material and labouring from the emotional and loving aspects of care. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the main terms suggested and particularly useful are the dual concepts of caring *about* or caring *for* someone (Ungerson 1983). This illustrates the separate yet decidedly interrelated sides of care, as it is clear to imagine how a person who cares *about* someone would likely care *for* them if they were unable to care for themselves. However, on the other hand it also makes it easier to consider situations where caring *about* someone may not be the initial motivation, for example, where a person is employed to care *for* others.

**Table 2.1 – The dual aspects of Care**

<u>Roy Parker 1980</u>  Tending	Used the term <b>tending</b> to describe the physical tasks involved such as feeding, washing, cleaning etc. (Parker 1980)
<u>Clare Ungerson 1983</u>  Care <i>about</i> Care <i>for</i>	<b>Care <i>about</i></b> is used to describe the emotional and relational aspects of care and <b>care <i>for</i></b> to stress the physical activities involved (Ungerson 1983)
<u>Hilary Graham 1983</u>  Labour Love	A <b>labour of love</b> – despite the emotional and symbolic bonds, in most cases care involves work. Argues these concepts need to be analysed together. (Graham 1983)
<u>Carol Thomas 1993</u>  Feeling state Activity state	Dual meaning of care as a <b>feeling state</b> (emotion, affection, love) or an <b>activity state</b> (work, tasks labour). (Thomas 1993)
<u>Nancy Folbre &amp; Thomas E Weisskopf 1998</u>  Caring labour	They use the term 'caring labour' to mean labour that is both <b>objectively</b> involved in the provision of care and <b>subjectively</b> motivated by caring attitudes and a sense of affection. (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998)



In defining care as work it would be expected that in the formal sector, where people are employed to 'care', this should be straightforward as this is contracted, waged labour. However, central to the argument about whether care should be conceptualised as work, is that even in public care services there are aspects of care which remain 'incompletely commodified' suggesting that not everything that is sold is commodified (Radin 1996) (Himmelweit 1999). The reason for this is that the care of another person can rarely be reduced to meeting their physical needs and usually involves emotional attachments through the development of a relationship between the care-giver and the care-receiver (Ungerson 1983) (Waerness 1984) (Qureshi 1990). There is a connection here to caring motives<sup>43</sup> and while those entering caring professions are unlikely to be motivated by altruism alone, the fact that they stay in an area of employment that is notoriously undervalued and underpaid<sup>44</sup>, indicates a concern for others rather than pure self-interest (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998). This supports the argument that, "...the person doing the caring is *inseparable* from the care given." (Himmelweit 1995 pp 8 my emphasis) therefore making it very difficult to define caring occupations as 'work' in the same way as other types of waged labour.

Observing these difficulties in defining caring occupations as work in the conventional sense highlights the complexity in conceptualising care provided by family and friends in the complementary (or informal) sector where the caring motives are more likely to be based on altruism or obligation rather than financial reward. We have to ask ourselves, therefore, is it important to define caring activities in the home as work? For some feminists, myself included, the answer is yes (Ungerson 1990) (Ungerson 1995) (Waerness 1984), as while care continues to be systematically undervalued in a 'culture of work' society (Hochschild 2003), then defining it as work may be the only way for the consequences for women as primary carers to be taken seriously<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> It has been suggested that there are six main motivations for why people care for others. These are: Altruism based on love and affection; sense of responsibility based on moral values; reciprocity in terms of an expectation that the favour will be returned; monetary reward as in contracted employment in paid care services; and coercion whether direct or indirect through fear of punishment or social ostracism (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998).

<sup>44</sup> See below for discussion of the 'care penalty' suffered by those working in caring professions.

<sup>45</sup> There is recognition here that if care were more valued in our society then it would be possible to accept that not everything needs to be categorised as work or non-work (Himmelweit 1995). See below for a discussion of an ethics of care approach which calls for a shift in our moral and ethical values to encourage a 'culture of care'.

However, in defining it as work, it is not the intention to 'dehumanise' care by suggesting it can, or should be, reduced to a cold, detached process or to undervalue the importance of care based on love and affection, especially for care-receivers (Abrams 1978) (Abrams et al. 1989) (Qureshi and Walker 1989) (Qureshi 1990). Instead, the aim is to recognise the dangers of suggesting the more valued relational aspects can only be found in care provided by family and friends. Unfortunately, the result of focusing too intently on the qualitatively different and implicitly 'better'<sup>46</sup> aspects of complementary (or informal) care has further increased the pressure on women who have been constructed as 'natural' carers. Once again biological determinism is reinforced with ideological links to theories which view care as a main construct to a woman's sense of self, indicating that care is also self-rewarding and implying only women, especially family women, can provide this type of care because it is in their 'nature' to do so (Graham 1983).

Furthermore, by concentrating on only the positive aspects of care provided by family and friends there is a tendency to understate the potential benefits of formal care and while limitations have also been reported<sup>47</sup>, empirical studies have shown that especially where formal care is provided on a one-to-one basis, intimate relationships have developed (Qureshi and Walker 1989). Overlooking these possibilities that there is high quality substitute care available, makes it even more difficult for women to consider ways to reduce their burden for care by relinquishing it to others should they want to, or indeed if they have to (Ungerson 1990) (Waerness 1984). However, the main concern is that while these types of care are seen at opposite ends of a 'good care', 'bad care' continuum, this masks the economic and social disadvantages to family and friends who are providing care (Graham 1999) (Leira 1990) (Graham 1983).

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<sup>46</sup> Describing care provided by family and friends as qualitatively different and 'better' care, refers to the commitment and dedication of carers and the emotional closeness which is most often associated with care based on pre-existing relationships. These are the aspects of complementary care which makes it more desirable to many care-receivers and care-givers, as will be further demonstrated through data presented in later chapters from this study.

<sup>47</sup> There were differences reported between informal and formal care-givers in the Qureshi and Walker study, recognising that while care services workers developed feelings of love and affection, they were more likely to impose limits on their time and availability (Qureshi and Walker 1989).



It is for this reason that it has been suggested that it would be more beneficial to women in particular to recognise that the boundaries between complementary and formal care are becoming increasingly blurred and that maintaining a 'false dichotomy' is unhelpful (Ungerson 1999) (Waerness 1984)<sup>48</sup>. A more useful approach, it is argued, is to concentrate on the similarities rather than the differences between these types of care. This means acknowledging that formal care services can make people feel cared *about* as well as cared *for*, while also recognising that there are limitations to care based on pre-existing family relationships which may not always be based on love and affection (Land and Rose 1985) (Graham 1999)<sup>49</sup>. When issues of standards of care are also considered<sup>50</sup>, then it becomes more difficult to argue that care provided by family and friends is always *automatically* better care.

In summary, while I have drawn attention here to the potential problems of concentrating only on the positive aspects of complementary care, this does not underestimate how important these are in the care relationship or ignore the qualitatively different experiences described by study respondents in this, and other studies (Abrams et al. 1989) (Qureshi and Walker 1989). Instead, the key message is to recognise that while this care is often preferred by care-receivers and many carer-givers are happy to provide the care, this should not be an excuse to take-for-granted and undervalue the labour as well as the love involved. Therefore, by accepting that complementary care involves the same physically demanding activities as formal care, this provides a more solid basis for serious consideration of ways to support those (women) providing it, in particular the debate about whether *all* care should be paid (Waerness 1984) (Ungerson 1995) (Land 2002b).

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<sup>48</sup> There is also a connection here to the private vs public split which often parallels complementary (or informal) and formal care, with informal associated with the private sphere and formal with the public. However, due to crossing of private/public boundaries, this has become an even more difficult dichotomy to maintain as care provided on a formal basis by carers paid with public money is increasingly being delivered in the private sphere of the home. Furthermore, elements of private care provided by family and friends are being increasingly formalised (or quasi-formalised) through the introduction of carer payments such as Invalid Care Allowance (see below). For this reason it has been suggested that 'private' been seen as care given on an individualistic basis (which can be informal or formal care) and that public care is used to describe care provided on a collective and institutionalised basis (Waerness 1984).

<sup>49</sup> Land and Rose first used the term 'compulsory altruism' to describe women's caring role within the family which can not always be assumed as a 'divine vocation'. They also note that in some cases, family care can be devoid of love and affection and, in extreme cases, can be abusive (Land and Rose 1985).

<sup>50</sup> Philip Abrams (1978) raised the issue of standards of care and while he supported the benefits of the qualitatively different nature of care provided by family and friends, he also recognised that it could be 'something of a disaster' compared to formal care which is regulated and monitored.

### ***'For love or money': paying for care***

There are a number of conceptual difficulties associated with 'putting a price' on care provided by family and friends in terms of the effect on quality and the consequences for those who provide this care (Qureshi 1990) (Ungerson 1995) (Himmelweit 1999) (England and Folbre 1999) (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998) (Land 2002b). In order to discuss the implications of policies to pay complementary childcare<sup>51</sup>, these difficulties have to be considered, in particular the main contention in the 'cash for care' debate that the choice is between care based on love or money. The implication is that once money is introduced into the care relationship, this has a negative effect by corrupting the love aspects and results in a loss of the 'warm glow' of satisfaction derived from caring *about* someone (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998). Furthermore, especially where care is based on family relationships, the suggestion is that it is offensive to talk about paying for this type of care, as if this in some way calls into question the carer's dedication<sup>52</sup>.

However, in the context of this study it is important to explore whether love and money can co-exist in the care relationship, returning the discussion to the benefits of dissolving boundaries between complementary (or informal) and formal care, which are especially relevant in relation to payment for care (Ungerson 1995). Using the argument that paid for, formal care can contain elements of labour and love (Ungerson 1983) (Waerness 1984) (Qureshi 1990) this suggests that love and money are not mutually exclusive even when the initial caring motive is a financial one. Where family and friends provide care, which is most often motivated by love and affection, then it is unlikely these deep-rooted emotional aspects would cease to exist if payment was introduced<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> See the following chapter.

<sup>52</sup> The Royal Commission on Long Term Care of older people made explicit reference to the concern that reducing a person's dedication to a cash payment demeans informal care provided by family and friends (Cited in Land 2002b).

<sup>53</sup> This theory is tested using data from this study which is presented in later chapters and is supported by other empirical studies which have shown that payment does not destroy pre-existing relationships (Qureshi and Walker 1989).



More importantly, the objective consequences for those currently providing complementary (or informal) care must be taken into account. It has been argued that there is no such thing as 'free' care and carers often experience economic problems in terms of loss of income, expenses incurred and loss of pension rights (Land 2002b). They also face social difficulties associated with isolation and stress because of the burden of responsibility, which can create tension and conflict that threatens the social relations on which the initial care relationship was based (Graham 1999)<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, those providing complementary (or informal) care are heavily over-represented among Britain's poor (Graham 1999) and therefore, it is important to explore the possibility that,

The use of cash payments in the informal sector can sustain, rather than damage, the willingness and ability of carers to care. (Land 2002b, pp.13).

This is not to suggest that the introduction of payment for complementary (or informal) care is unproblematic. Even those fighting for equal recognition between care provided by family and friends and formal care, have raised serious concerns, stressing the importance of analysing care from a gendered perspective (Himmelweit 2002), or questioning if payments are in the best interests of women (Ungerson 1995). Clare Ungerson in particular has asked if payments could potentially be entrapping rather than liberating, voicing concerns about the further development of 'grey labour' which falls outside of the conventional labour market where at least employees are offered some protection in terms of minimum working conditions and workers' rights. At the same time she also questions the effect on the care relationship if this type of care were to become more 'formalised' through tighter controls and monitoring which may result in a loss of flexibility that makes complementary (or informal) care so desirable<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> The economic and social consequences of complementary childcare are discussed in subsequent chapters, in particular examples of tension and conflict within the family childcare relationship.

<sup>55</sup> See also Hazel Qureshi 1990's discussion of 'professionalizing the informal' (Qureshi 1990).

However, the main concerns are related to the way in which payments are made and the rate at which they are paid. Where care by family or friends is currently paid in the UK, for example through the Invalid Care Allowance scheme<sup>56</sup>, these payments are most often in the form of nominal or 'symbolic payments' that are not related to market levels of wages for the job. While there are reports of care-giver and care-receiver satisfaction with these payments (Qureshi and Walker 1989)<sup>57</sup>, they do have a tendency to reiterate the sentiment that this type of care is based on love not money (Ungerson 1995) implying that carers should be happy with any type of reward. Moreover, it is argued that even at a low level these payments can increase pressure on women in particular to give up or forgo conventional employment<sup>58</sup>, therefore leading to further exploitation and strengthening underlying traditional divisions of labour (Finch 1990)<sup>59</sup>

On a more positive note, Clare Ungerson has also suggested that symbolic payments could become the 'thin edge of the wedge' leading to fully-fledged wages as is the case in other countries<sup>60</sup>. However, while this link to the market 'rate for the job' is seen as more satisfactory than symbolic payments, it is also necessary to look at the status of the caring profession in general to consider once again what this would mean in terms of women's position. In other words, if the 'rate for job' equals low paid, low status employment then fighting for payment for care could be another way of marginalising women by perpetuating job segregation and the gender pay gap.

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<sup>56</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, Invalid Care Allowance (more recently Carer's Allowance) was the only official payment scheme to pay for care provided by family and friends in the UK (although there were 'unofficial' schemes running through local councils in parts of England and Northern Ireland to pay a nominal, set amount to family members for providing complementary childcare – see Chapter 3 for more information). Invalid Care Allowance was introduced in 1975 and it was initially available only to close relatives although married women were excluded on the grounds that they would likely be at home anyway and therefore available to provide care. This allowance was extended to wider kin and non-relatives in 1982 and in 1987 married women were included as a result of a European Courts ruling on the grounds of equal rights. This allowance is paid to informal carers caring for someone with an illness or disability which prevents them caring for themselves. The carer must be of working age and not in paid employment or full-time education and must be caring for someone for at least 35 hours per week (Land 2002b). See <http://www.direct.gov.uk/CaringForSomeone/fs/en> for more details.

<sup>57</sup> It should be acknowledged that there are likely to be elements of 'any payment is better than no payment' for care that would be provided anyway.

<sup>58</sup> Women are more likely to give up work to become full-time carers because of the factors discussed earlier in this chapter leading to a disadvantaged position in the labour market where they have less to lose which has a cause and effect relationship to traditional gender ideologies of women as 'natural' carers.

<sup>59</sup> Janet Finch (1990) has also questioned the benefits of paying for care using the same argument presented in the 'wages for housework' debate. In essence, she suggests that it must also be considered whether the short-term gains undermine the long-term attempts to produce a fairer society where housework and caring activities are more equally shared between men and women.

<sup>60</sup> See the following chapter for examples.



The problem, therefore, is far wider than a lack of recognition for the 'hidden' caring work of women in the home and extends to the value we, as a society, place on all types of care. Care is central to human life but because it has been pushed to the periphery in favour of an overemphasis on the importance of paid work, the caring work and contributions of women<sup>61</sup> as primary carers, continues to be undervalued (Tronto 1993) (Sevenhuijsen 1998) (Folbre 2001). This is the case whether the care is provided by family or friends or on a formal basis with those working in caring professions often suffering a 'care penalty' for the 'privilege' of doing a job which is expected to create its own intrinsic reward (England and Folbre 1999).

It has been argued that the only way to truly change the status of care in our culture, requires a change in our core values by recognising that care is meaningful in its own right as something with which we are all involved as part of our citizenship in the same way as paid work (Sevenhuijsen 1998). In particular, it requires a shift in emphasis from the close association between 'women's morality'<sup>62</sup> and the implied naturalness of women's caring, to an ethics of care framework which calls on the whole of society to care with the same morality normally associated with women's care (Tronto 1993) (Sevenhuijsen 1998). It is here that the 'penalties' women face as primary carers, whether in the home or in the formal labour market, could truly be addressed as a redefinition of 'moral boundaries' (Tronto 1993) would make care more legitimate, more morally worthy and a more acceptable activity for everyone, including men. This in turn could lead us to consider workable alternatives by viewing care as a social responsibility, with revised notions of morality incorporated into our social policies<sup>63</sup>. This might mean that those who do 'care' are appropriately appreciated and rewarded for the labour they provide by recognising that this does not have to be at the expense of the loving aspects of care.

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<sup>61</sup> It is also acknowledged that as care is distributed along the lines of power that other vulnerable groups such the less wealthy, immigrants and ethnic minorities are also among excluded groups in society who carry out a disproportionate amount of care that the more powerful are able to demand.

<sup>62</sup> As Joan Tronto (1993) has acknowledged, while it has become a commonly accepted notion that women are more moral than men, there is no precise definition of what constitutes 'women's morality'. Within the context of this discussion, it is used to describe women's greater capacity to appreciate the value of human relationships, the value of care and compassion and a more pronounced desire to meet the needs of others, focusing on collective rather than individual interests.

<sup>63</sup> See the following Chapter 3 and Chapter 8 for a discussion of how family-friendly policies for both men and women could assist by moving care from the periphery to the centre of our social and political values.

### ***Why do family care so much?***

Having established that care is gendered, and that care of others is intricately linked to the way women are marginalised as primary carers, it is important to explore why over the 'care cycle' (Graham 1999) care by family is also considered 'natural' in terms of duty, obligation and expectation. The study of kinship and family<sup>64</sup> relationships has led to a number of theoretical understandings about the nature of family obligation exploring concepts of normative expectation and consensus (Finch 1989) (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999) and provided insight into which family members are most likely to be primary carers (Qureshi and Simons 1987) (Qureshi and Walker 1989) (Cotterill 1992). This is all within the context of changing notions of what constitutes 'family' and suggestions by social theorists that the new social and economic conditions of late modernity have created a 'new individualism' (Giddens 1996) and an 'ethos of self-absorption' (Beck 1992) that have weakened family ties and obligations.

The renewed interest in 'the family' within mainstream sociology has sparked a debate about whether radical changes to the ideological construct of the traditional family have resulted in family decline or whether these changes are simply more representative of how people live in contemporary society. Those acknowledging the diversity of the modern family (Smart and Neale 1999) have focused on social and demographic changes such as the increase in cohabitation and higher rates of divorce to argue that we need to reconsider the 'family' and recognise that it now describes a number of different types of relationships which do not necessarily fit the conventional nuclear family model. It has also been suggested that rather than the traditional structuralist fixed view of 'family structures', people now 'do' family (Morgan 1996)<sup>65</sup>. This emphasis on the active practice of family relationships is particularly important when analysing the processes through which human agency and social structures interact in terms of a shift towards, "...created commitments rather than rules of obligation." (Finch and Mason 1993, pp. 172).

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<sup>64</sup> The terms kin and family are often used interchangeably. However, as technically kin describes people related by blood, the term family is preferred for this study which is about family members related through both birth and marriage.

<sup>65</sup> Family theorist David Morgan has suggested the term 'family practices' instead to emphasise how 'family', as an adjective rather than a noun, refers to sets of practices which deal with ideas of parenthood, kinship, marriage, and the associated obligations and expectations, which define people's lives (Morgan 1996, pp. 11).



To explore further the changing nature of family obligation, theoretical insights which have revealed the fluid nature of duty as a concept are especially useful (Finch 1989) (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999). The suggestion is that how family members view their obligations is influenced by changes in circumstances such as marriage, childbearing, widowhood and financial hardship; all of which carry certain normative expectations about the level of support family will provide. However, it has also been argued that family obligation associated with these 'patterned changes' can not be assumed to be 'natural' or guaranteed, as duty and obligation are now negotiated and conditional rather than governed by strict normative rules. Therefore, the more flexible concepts of negotiated commitments and normative guidelines have been proposed as alternative ways of understanding family obligations, contesting notions of normative agreement or consensus about the 'proper thing to do' and highlighting the dangers of making assumptions of expected mutual assistance within and between families (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999)<sup>66</sup>.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging the conditional and negotiated nature of obligation, it is not the intention to ignore all aspects of consensus or agreement within families about mutual support. This is especially the case with very close family such as parents and children and while arguably greater individual agency has led to changes and adaptations over generations about what family should do for one another (Brannen 2003)<sup>67</sup>, there are transmitted beliefs about family obligation that remain very powerful determinants. A refining of the concept of consensus, in the form of 'procedural consensus' (Finch and Mason 1999), offers a useful way of recognising that while there may not be a normative or absolute agreement about what should be done, there is a more general consensus about 'how to work out' the proper thing to do within families. Therefore, within procedural consensus, the agreement is about what factors should be taken into account as 'legitimate' reasons for expecting or providing family support.

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<sup>66</sup> Assumptions about family obligations and mutual assistance embedded in social policies in the UK are discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>67</sup> Julia Brannen (2003) has proposed a typology of four main types of intergenerational relations to consider the tension between change and continuity in families and to explore beliefs about the transmission of material assets, childcare and elder care, sociability, emotional support and values. (See Chapter 7 where aspects of this typology are used to consider intergenerational relations among the case study households).

When looking at care provided by family, transmitted beliefs about *who* should care for other family members are especially influential and where the secondary care of children is concerned, the greatest expectation is with grandparents<sup>68</sup>. Once again, persistent ideologies of motherhood passed on through the mother-daughter relationship (Chodorow 1979), play a significant part adding further insight into why grandmothers in particular have been constructed as 'first choice' alternatives when mothers are not available to care for their children. The strength of these intergenerational gendered ideologies produces a particularly compelling sense of obligation that is hard to resist. However, even in these compelling situations this obligation is rarely, if ever, unconditional, therefore reiterating the 'procedural' elements of consensus during negotiation in terms of perceived 'luxury' or genuine 'need' (Finch and Mason 1999)<sup>69</sup>.

While grandparents are most likely to have the greatest sense of obligation to care for their grandchildren, there are also issues of maternal or paternal relationship connections to consider. In a 'hierarchy of caring' model (Qureshi and Walker 1989), childcare is most often distributed along maternal familial lines, especially as it is mainly mothers who arrange childcare (Brannen and Moss 1991) (Wheelock and Jones 2002) therefore making it more likely that they will turn to their own family in the first instance. Furthermore, as there is usually an especially close relationship between a mother and daughter which, it has been argued, results in 'strong positive affective bonds' which blur concepts of obligation and affection (Cotterill 1992), this reinforces the maternal grandmother's role as the most 'natural' replacement for a mother.

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<sup>68</sup> In exploring further the strength of obligation of grandparents with regard to the care of their grandchildren, it must be appreciated that until 1948 the Poor Law in Britain stated that grandparents were legally financially responsible for their grandchildren as 'liable relatives'. While currently, the legal responsibility only applies to two generations (parents and children), it must be appreciated that laws such as these have reinforced social norms about lines of responsibility and obligation among close family members (Finch 1989).

<sup>69</sup> In the context of this study, financial hardship is a particularly important 'legitimate' reason as to why complementary childcare was provided, as economic vulnerability and uncertainty usually provokes a strong sense of family solidarity. The extent to which the childcare provided was conditional as a support based on genuine 'need' for work purposes, rather than 'luxury' for leisure or social reasons, is explored in later chapters.



However, it must also be considered that no matter how 'natural' this role may appear there may be grandmothers and other family women who do not accept this responsibility unreservedly or without certain expectations of reciprocation. This again raises questions about motivations for care and challenges assumptions about women's 'natural altruism' (Land and Rose 1985). Therefore, it has been suggested that altruism cannot truly be analysed without appreciating the role of reciprocity, as,

...the separateness of altruism and reciprocity in principle begins to collapse in practice. (Abrams et al. 1989), pp. 34)

Within the parent/grandparent relationship, the concept of a 'moral economy of grandparenting'<sup>70</sup> has been used as a way of conceptualising the 'give and take' aspects of reciprocity in an attempt to account for differences in grandparent satisfaction with their role, especially with regard to the amount of childcare provided (Arthur et al. 2003). This is particularly useful in analysing how families might work through the difficulties of obligation and expectation associated with long-term childcare provision, where there might be an unspoken understanding about what parents will do to repay grandparents for their support<sup>71</sup>. This acceptance of an 'internal regime of reciprocity' (Arthur et al. 2003) seems a more useful concept with which to analyse reasons why family continue to provide so much care by acknowledging that what may appear to be entirely altruistically motivated is embedded in normative expectation, albeit conditional and negotiated, about what family will do in return. Therefore, in returning to the discussion of 'family decline', it seems that traditional family ties and obligations have not so much weakened but have been redefined in the light of changing notions of family. This has resulted in new ways of dealing with duty and obligation which are intricately linked to certain explicit and implicit expectations of reciprocation in short or long term.

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<sup>70</sup> Moral economy was first used to analyse household relationships by (Thompson 1971) to highlight the importance of the interactions between market and non-market activities and to recognise the social relationships which establish mutual obligation to ensure the survival of household members (cited in (Mariussen and Wheelock 1997)).

<sup>71</sup> 'Payment in kind' and forms of reciprocity are explored through the data in later chapters.

## Decisions in the household

The theoretical and conceptual areas explored so far of the gendered nature of (child)care, the constraints childcare in particular place on women as mothers, and grandmothers, and the contested nature of what care is and what it should provide, have been necessary to provide the context for this discussion of household decision-making. Household provisioning depends on decisions made about the distribution of income earning work and caring and domestic work, decisions which are heavily influenced by the interaction between the socio-cultural as well as the economic and political factors described. However, decision making models of the household that continue to influence the direction of childcare provision in the UK, which are based mainly on theories of economic rationality, continue to be institutionalised into social and family policies<sup>72</sup>. This is of particular concern to this study of complementary childcare, as both gender and concepts of morality about 'good' mothers and who should care for children are central to childcare selection (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) (Himmelweit 2002) yet theories of the 'rational economic *man*' repeatedly side-step these issues.

Therefore, the challenge is a 'theoretical middle ground' (Kabeer 2000) in household decision making which accounts for the role of individual (or collective) agency in terms of rational choice from a sociological as well as an economic perspective while recognising the influence of overarching structures. In doing so it is important first to consider how economists have interpreted rational choice theory in terms of objective rationality, especially as it relates to economic decision-making. Consequently, the 'rational economic *man*' model assumes that human behaviour is driven by self-interest resulting in individual choice and action in the form of cost-benefit calculations to maximise utility (Becker 1981). While further models have gone some way to include preferences and tastes considering how individuals maximise their welfare (Becker 1996), the focus has remained on the separate economic agent with stable preferences.

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<sup>72</sup> Specific childcare policies are discussed in the following chapter.



Sociologists have challenged this 'hard' interpretation of rational choice theory recognising the role of ever changing values, beliefs and desires as well as preferences and tastes, while also focusing on the collective rather than individual nature of the rational decision-making process (Elster 1989) (Goldthorpe 2000). As stated in the quote below from John Goldthorpe in his quest for a more empirically tenable version of rational choice theory for use in sociology,

...sociologists will be best served by some version of RAT [Rational Action Theory] that is weaker than that of mainstream economics...a version that treats as rational both holding beliefs and acting on these beliefs when actors have 'good reasons' for so doing. (Goldthorpe 2000, pp. 127)

While these interpretations emphasise individual (or collective) agency, it is also important to consider the duality and interaction between agency and structure (Kabeer 2000). In other words, it is necessary to have a framework which recognises the relevance of rationality and individual (or collective) agency in decision making without ignoring the constraining structures within which individuals exercise their agency. Nancy Folbre's 'structures of constraint' (Folbre 1994) provides such a framework within which individual agency can be more accurately described by acknowledging boundaries of choice based on a number of different collective identities such as gender, class and ethnicity, which empower (or disadvantage) some people more than others. This framework also provides a more comprehensive view of how individual tastes and preferences are socially constructed and influenced by external constraints at the macro level, while appreciating that at the micro level of the individual, actions are not predetermined and individuals have the capacity to make conscious and deliberate decisions. However, while individuals are 'free' to choose within a more flexible 'purposeful choice' or 'choice action' (Folbre 1994) perspective, this does not require strict adherence to rational choice based on economic factors but appreciates that self-interest does not necessarily mean economic selfishness<sup>73</sup>. Therefore, in maximising their utility, individuals may also value non-monetary factors such as their own happiness and the happiness of others (Folbre 1993).

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<sup>73</sup> Neoclassical economists rarely apply the theory of self-interest without the related assumption that utilities are independent. Therefore, self-interest is now associated with individual selfishness.

By viewing self-interest and utility in the broader sense, this also accounts for the sociological view of rationality which incorporates values, beliefs and desires by removing the association between rationality and economic selfishness which is implicit in the 'rational economic *man*' model. It highlights the importance of asking, 'rational by whose standards?' in terms of what is or is not considered rational behaviour. Furthermore, this reconsideration of rationality is especially important to the analysis in this study when trying to explain the links between structure (in the form of social and childcare policies) and individual agency (mothers' agency in particular) in the context of moral and social-cultural notions of acceptability in terms of work and childcare.

### ***Rational by whose standards?***

Recognising a distinction between different types of rationality is not a new development as early sociologists separated 'formal' rationality based on economic calculations, from 'substantivist' rationality where social values and needs are taken into account<sup>74</sup>. As discussed above, sociologists continue to strive for a version of rational choice which stands up to empirical experiences of how people live their lives. More recently, contemporary concepts of rationality have emerged which account for changing social and employment contexts in insecure, fragmented societies where, it is argued, people have to be more self-aware and reflexive in their decision-making (Wallace 2002)<sup>75</sup>. Of particular relevance to this study is the concept of 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) which recognises the, albeit socially constructed, difference in women's and men's morality and notions of self-interest whereby women have a greater capacity for interdependence of utilities (Folbre 1994).

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<sup>74</sup> This refers to the work of Max Weber (see (Wheelock and Oughton 1998, pp. 175) for a summary of Weber's definitions) and Karl Polanyi (see reprinted essay 'The economy as instituted process', in (Granovetter and Swedburg 2001)) who first focused on different forms of formal and substantivist meanings of economics and rationality in relation to economic and social behaviour

<sup>75</sup> Clare Wallace (2002) argues that the crisis of the Fordist work society and the new international economy has created a context whereby decision making has become more complex. She goes on to argue that in post-fordist societies people are struggling to find meaningful ways to live their lives in the face of irregular, unstable employment, which may result in behaviour which appears economically irrational but provides a sense of purpose and satisfaction.



Consequently, it is argued that when women consider the 'rational' costs and benefits of their decisions, these are more likely to include an appreciation of the needs of others and to be framed within the context of collective understandings about what is morally right (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). This emphasises the substantivist view as social values are extremely important to rationality to the extent that it would seem 'irrational' to behave in a socially unacceptable way as this could cause conflict or alienation within social relationships.

Therefore, the concept of gendered moral rationalities more accurately describes mothers' value systems, as it acknowledges gender by recognising women's inclusive sense of utility when making decisions about market and non-market activities. It deals with the dilemma of morality as these decisions are made through a process of internal and external negotiation to reconcile notions of the morally 'proper' thing to do. Finally, it is rational, although not in the recognised economically driven conventional way, as it represents an approach to decision making that 'makes perfect sense' within the context of social as well as economic constraints (Duncan et al. 2003).

### ***Childcare selection***

In recognising the different gendered moral rationalities women hold<sup>76</sup>, the inadequacy of rational economic *man* to explain mothers' behaviour in relation to leaving their children to go out to work becomes apparent. In all forms of gendered moral rationalities, moral considerations are primary, so much so that economic rationality and policy constraints may be secondary or contingent factors in decisions about paid work, with non-monetary, socio-cultural influences which form the social context of mothers' lived experiences taking precedence (Duncan and Edwards 1999). Therefore, when considering how best to analyse childcare selection while recognising these highly influential socio-cultural factors, the concept of the 'embeddedness' of economic decisions in the social institution of the household (Granovetter 1985), is especially important as it captures the aspects of utility and rationality associated with women's morality which are central to decisions about childcare.

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<sup>76</sup> Duncan and Edwards identified three different gendered moral rationalities. 'Primarily mother' places higher levels of moral significance to the role of mothers caring for their own children whereas mothers holding a 'primarily worker' moral position focus on the benefits of paid work as separate to their identities of motherhood. The 'mother/worker integral' moral rationality combines these positions in that financial and a 'work ethic' role model is seen as part of a mothers' moral responsibility to their children (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). These rationalities will be explored further through the data analysis in later chapters.

Considering the socio-cultural, as well as the economic and political influences on childcare selection also provides more insight into complementary childcare as it is clear to see how external family and societal views, as well as internal perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' mothering affect women as mothers and workers (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004) (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). It is therefore more understandable why, as mothers struggle with decisions about the uptake of paid work and the acceptability of substitute childcare, a close family member such as a grandmother may seem the most morally rational option. Consequently, 'gendered moral rationalities' and the concept of embeddedness are especially significant theoretical and conceptual tools in analysing childcare selection in general and complementary childcare in particular as they recognise mothers' value systems and mothers' agency, while seriously challenging rational economic theory as it relates to childcare<sup>77</sup>.

Searching for an overarching framework into which these concepts may fit, returns the discussion once again to 'structures of constraint' and a more appropriate alternative to 'rational choice' in the form of 'purposeful choice' or 'choice action' (Folbre 1994). This presents an active view of childcare selection which allows for a form of rationality that is not entirely economically motivated while recognising that 'choice' in terms of individual or household agency is limited by structures of constraint located in collective identities such as gender and class. Accordingly, this acknowledges that the purposeful choices of one generation, influenced by ideologies and identities of 'natural' motherhood combined with concepts of care and family obligation, are transmitted to the next generation, illustrating the importance of the socio-cultural structures people are socialised into which inevitably affects their 'choices'. However, what purposeful choice also provides is a place for economic calculations, by recognising that while this may have a limited role in situations which are emotionally sensitive such as the care of children, it is nonetheless part of the decision making process which has to be taken into account alongside social contextual factors. Therefore, to make the choice purposeful, the interaction between social, political and economic factors is especially important and highly significant when analysing how households make their decisions about who should look after their children.

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<sup>77</sup> The extent to which gendered moral rationalities take precedence over theories of economic rationality are tested empirically in this study in relation to the reluctance to accept financial incentives to use childcare.



## Conclusions

This chapter has provided an in-depth analysis of theoretical and conceptual debate in a number of areas relevant to the context in which complementary childcare is received and provided. By focusing on women's dual role in household provisioning as care providers and, increasingly, economic providers, it has been possible to emphasise the contradictions inherent in continued ideologies of motherhood which construct women as 'natural' carers in the home which are at odds with the increased desire, and expectation, that women will contribute to the labour market. In considering how women attempt to reconcile their mother and worker roles, significant socio-cultural as well as economic and political constraints have been identified, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between women's disadvantaged position in the household and in the labour market.

In acknowledging internal, normative constraints together with external, institutionalised structural constraints, the discussion presented here rejects the suggestion that, in modern societies, women are able to make unconstrained 'lifestyle choices' (Hakim 2000) with regard to motherhood and career. Instead, the importance of the different social, cultural and economic situational positions of women has been the focus, arguing that these positions represent collective identities which shape the context through which women exercise their individual agency. Therefore, within an overarching framework of 'structures of constraint' (Folbre 1994), concepts describing women's varying morality, utility and rationality have been offered as part of an overall analytical toolbox to allow a more thorough understanding of data presented in later chapters.

It has also been argued that the topic of this study, the care of children by people other than their parents, is a particularly useful example through which to explore the interaction between individual agency and external structural constraints. Childcare selection is not only influenced by institutionalised structural constraints such as government policies and costs of childcare, but is also subject to normative constraints such as personal identities of motherhood and transmitted family values and beliefs. Consequently, in deciding on 'substitute' childcare, mothers in particular may exercise their agency by giving precedence to moral rather than economic factors challenging rational economic theory. However, they are acting in a rational way in accordance with collective moral understandings of 'proper' behaviour, which once again illustrates the close relationship between agency and social structural factors such as normative values and beliefs which shape individual 'choices'.

To consider the role of family members as complementary childcarers, the dual nature of care has been discussed in order to provide insight into why parents, (mothers in particular) might prefer close family members to care for their children. Intricately linked to intergenerational gendered ideologies and normative expectations about family (negotiated) obligation, especially through maternal relationships, it has been suggested that in a 'hierarchy of care' model, maternal grandmothers are most likely to be first choice 'substitute' childcarers. As these family members usually live elsewhere, this challenges the fixed boundary definition of the household, allowing discussion of household provisioning to be extended to include vital contributions from non-residents.

Overall, this discussion has highlighted that household provisioning is a social process (Oughton and Wheelock 2003), and that decisions about the allocation of vital non-market activities such as the care of children, and market activities such as paid work, are inevitably 'embedded' in the social relationships of those contributing to household resources with a focus on collective interest rather than self-interest. The question is how does this relate to actual behaviour and individual and family experiences within the household for parents who rely on complementary childcare and childcarers who provide it? In other words, how do these theories and concepts translate into practice?

Using unique data produced from this study, the following chapters test empirically the debates and dilemmas posed throughout this chapter by firstly quantifiably confirming the most commonly used types of childcare by working and non-working parents, and then by examining how parents (mothers) make their decisions about work and childcare in the context of their socio-economic positions and socio-cultural influences. Furthermore, through in-depth analysis of entire households (including extended family members providing childcare), the distinctiveness of 'family childcare' will also be explored, looking at how this affects family relationships in terms of negotiated obligation, normative expectations and family conflict. However, to complete the contextual framework for this empirical analysis, the next chapter presents the political debates relevant to this study. This looks at the UK Government's position on policies regarding childcare to consider further constraints on decision making for households in the study as they struggled to balance their childcare and paid work responsibilities.



## Chapter 3: Policy context

For decades, the family – both as a social institution and as decision-maker – was largely assumed away. [However]...the changing role of women and evolving new household forms are an intrinsic - possibly leading - part of the socio-economic transformation around us... household forms are being revolutionised even if some welfare states do not seem fully aware of it. (Esping-Anderson 1999, pp. 12)

In the previous chapter, the complex interdependence of non-market and market activities was discussed in terms of overall household provisioning. The focus was on childcare as a crucial resource to allow these two spheres to function considering the number of internal and external constraints women in particular face when making decisions about the take-up of paid work once they have children. By highlighting the socio-cultural constraints which surround the selection of childcare, it was possible to gain some insight into why mothers struggle to reconcile their dual responsibilities as care, and increasingly financial, providers to their children. However, a more complete understanding of the decision-making framework surrounding the distribution of essential paid and unpaid household activities requires the inclusion of a discussion about the role of government policies as external influences on household behaviour. This recognises the inseparability of state, market and household when analysing social and economic provisioning, in particular the central role of the household as a crucial decision-maker which is inevitably influenced by the welfare state programmes and labour market regulations in which it is embedded (Esping-Andersen 1990; Esping-Anderson 1999).

Government policies can either facilitate or obstruct aspects of household provisioning and as suggested in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, the changing role of women and new family and household structures<sup>1</sup>, present significant challenges to policy-makers who must acknowledge these changes and realise that they can no longer 'assume away' the household. Of particular relevance to this study is recognition of the importance of childcare as a macroeconomic issue within this context of 'socio-economic transformation' (Esping-Anderson 1999) which demands solutions at a political level.

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<sup>1</sup> See the previous chapter for a discussion of these two issues.

The aim in this chapter is to examine the Government's response to the 'childcare crisis' in the UK, focusing on policies and initiatives introduced by New Labour when they were first elected in 1997. Since then there has been an unprecedented amount of attention paid to childcare and early years services as crucial components necessary to fulfil a number of key New Labour agendas. These include increasing social inclusion, attacking child poverty, improving labour market participation, and raising standards in education. As these agendas are not necessarily complementary, the analysis also discusses specific concerns about "...tensions between the social investment approach to childcare on the one hand, and the desire to promote mothers' employment on the other." (Lewis 2003, pp. 219). This also raises questions about the appropriateness of New Labour's mixed economy approach to childcare, especially the expansion of formal private childcare which continues to be financially unrealistic for many parents and may also clash with the predominate 'childcare culture' in the UK where socio-cultural and moral aspects often lead parents to seek alternative solutions such as complementary childcare. The discussion also considers how the mixed economy approach is consistent with the Government's broader 'Third Way' agenda (Penn and Randall 2005) exploring the UK's position in terms of commitment to state provision, promotion of market services, or reliance on family and kin (Esping-Anderson 1999).

To begin the analysis there is a brief history of childcare in the UK which, in the decades following the Second World War, was mainly a private matter with little commitment to public provision and reliance on politically constructed notions of motherhood within the male breadwinner model of welfare (Borchorst 1990). This is followed by a summary of childcare policy from 1997 to 2002 which covers the duration of this study of complementary childcare (1999 to 2002) and therefore provides vital context in terms of policies which were facilitating or constraining the household provisioning and childcare selection process of study participants. During this period, New Labour introduced a number of initiatives which are discussed in this section beginning with the first ever UK National Childcare Strategy (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998) and other related programmes such as New Deal for Lone Parents and Sure Start for disadvantaged children. A new Childcare Tax Credit system was also introduced and this is discussed considering how this system reinforces the mixed economy approach to childcare, intended to help with the costs of registered childcare for low-income families and therefore (theoretically) increasing demand for private childcare while simultaneously expanding the private sector through supply-side subsidies.



The final section looks at more recent childcare policy developments by reflecting on how New Labour has addressed concerns and criticisms of the National Childcare Strategy. This concentrates in particular on the change in focus from an emphasis on the adult worker to the needs of children in the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper in 2003 (H M Government 2003). This child-centred approach was then developed further in the new 'Ten year strategy for childcare' produced in 2004 (H M Treasury 2004) and has subsequently formed the basis of proposed legislation in the first ever 'Childcare Bill' (House of Commons 2005)<sup>2</sup>. These new developments are presented so that changes in childcare policies in the UK can be explored in relation to the fieldwork analysis in later chapters. This allows an additional beneficial element to the PhD project as it enables consideration to be given to the extent to which the Government has responded to some of the shortfalls in provision and support identified by parents and childcarers in this study. This then makes it possible to discuss in the final Conclusions chapter how, despite these recent developments and changes in emphasis, childcare policies might still be failing parents in the UK.

### **Previous childcare in the UK: a private family matter**

Prior to 1997, childcare in the UK was not deemed a crucial area for economic or social policy and the limited daycare provision available served mainly as a welfare function for mothers who were unable to provide care for their own children (Penn and Randall 2005). This was consistent with the underlying ideological principles that mothers of young children should stay at home and this was actively encouraged and supported through government policies. Therefore, the liberal British welfare regime, characterised by familialistic policies which individualised risk and placed maximum obligation on the family (Esping-Andersen 1990) (Esping-Anderson 1999)<sup>3</sup>, explicitly supported 'political motherhood' with its focus on the family centred male breadwinner, female homemaker model (Borchorst 1990).

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing this thesis this bill was before Parliament awaiting approval.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Esping-Anderson's 'three worlds' typology used to describe the degree of 'solidarities' within each type of regime with the labels, 'liberal', 'conservative' and 'social democratic'. See Esping-Anderson 1999, p. 74, for further explanation.

Furthermore, state policies in the UK also maintained the distinction between care and education while other European countries were dissolving this division and were showing far higher levels of commitment to the employment (and arguably the financial independence) of women. In these countries, Social Democratic welfare regimes were developing and welfare was being 'de-familialised' through policies which lessened reliance on family with a commitment to universalism and comprehensive risk pooling through generous state benefits intended to minimise market dependency and maximise equality (Esping-Andersen 1990) (Esping-Anderson 1999). In terms of childcare and early years, as early as 1965 in Denmark and 1972 in Sweden<sup>4</sup>, radical changes increased entitlement to public childcare and in the decades that followed the universal model was further developed so that every child had the right to access services regardless of their parent's employment status (Borchorst 1990).

Meanwhile the UK continued to perform poorly in terms of child poverty, gender inequality and childcare provision (table 3.1) at a time when the 'male breadwinner model' on which UK social policies depended was under serious threat. Consequently, while the male earner and female homemaker model was politically advantageous when men could earn a decent family wage from higher paid manufacturing jobs, lower paid jobs available in the new services industry could not sustain most families where two incomes were required. Therefore, more and more women were entering the workforce<sup>5</sup> and with limited public and private childcare provision<sup>6</sup>, parents in the UK had to find alternative ways to ensure their children were cared for while they worked. As a result the main growth in female employment was part-time work (table 3.1) and this was accompanied by a continuing reliance on complementary childcare provided by family and friends<sup>7</sup>. However, by the late 1990s, it was becoming clear that if mothers were to be constructed as workers then childcare had to be taken seriously as an important macroeconomic issue. This was the challenge facing New Labour in their first term which began in 1997.

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<sup>4</sup> While there are other European countries with well developed childcare provision programmes, Denmark and Sweden have been selected for the purposes of comparison throughout this chapter as these countries are acknowledged as the exemplars of universal and mainly publicly provided services.

<sup>5</sup> This was especially apparent among women with young children whose employment more than doubled from 16 per cent in 1973 to 39 per cent by 1996 (Berthoud and Gershuny 2000).

<sup>6</sup> In 1993 the Conservative Government provided minimal support with childcare costs for low-income families through a childcare disregard to family credit and therefore, although private childcare was increasing by the mid 1990s, this was mainly purchased by high earning, professional mothers who could afford it (Lewis 2003).

<sup>7</sup> As evidenced by this and other childcare studies over the last decade (Whitherspoon and Prior 1991) (Marsh and McKay 1993) (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999).



**Table 3.1 – Comparison of socio-demographic and childcare information for Denmark, Sweden and the UK (2002)**

	<b>Denmark (Social Democratic)</b>	<b>Sweden (Social Democratic)</b>	<b>UK (Liberal regime)</b>
Child poverty (% children in households with income below 50% national median)	2.4 (2000)	4.2 (2000)	15.4 (1999)
Women's economic activity as a % of men's	84%	89%	75%
Women's part-time employment as % of total employment	23%	21%	40%
Childcare and early years provision	Universal - Heavily subsidised and predominately public local authority provided service from one year old (childcare entitlement does not depend on parents' attachment to the labour market) – in some municipalities children under one year old are also offered a guaranteed childcare place although most under one's continue to be cared for at home by their parents	Universal – Public provided with each municipality legally responsible for providing childcare for all children aged one to 12 years (childcare entitlement does not depend on parents' attachment to the labour market). All children under one year olds are cared for at home by their parents due to a generous paid parental leave system for 480 days (approx. 68 weeks).	From 1997 universal part-time early years places for 3 & 4 year olds. Private, formal childcare promoted for pre-school (0-3 years) and for 3-14 year olds in the form of privately run out-of-school clubs.
Parental contribution to childcare costs	20% of childcare costs up to a maximum of 30-33%	10-11% of childcare costs – maximum fee introduced in 2002 so that parental fee is no more than 11 per cent of gross cost - universal pre-school free from 4 years old	On average parents still covering approx. 75% of childcare costs. Many still covering all costs. From 1998 some help available for very low income families through Childcare Tax Credit.

Source: (Daycare Trust 2005 - Table 1) also (OECD 2005)

## **Childcare policy under New Labour (1997 to 2002)**

When the Labour Party was elected in 1997, they declared an attack on child poverty and social exclusion with a strategy of social investment to improve the chances for children, especially those in disadvantaged areas, and by promoting the positive role model of an 'adult wage-earner' family. One of the first initiatives in early 1998 was the New Deal for Lone Parents specifically designed to help lone parents into work and directly addressing New Labour's 'welfare to work' agenda. The Sure Start programme was also introduced in 1998 which aimed to achieve better outcomes for children and parents as a way of tackling child poverty. The main principle of Sure Start was starting early with advice on health in pregnancy, preparation for parenthood, and help with decisions about returning to work and advice on childcare options. It also signalled a move towards integrated education and care through 'educare'<sup>8</sup> with a commitment to improve the social, cognitive and emotional development of disadvantaged children which studies indicated could be achieved by exposure to high quality collective childcare and early years services<sup>9</sup>. It was clear, therefore, that the success of these interrelated programmes depended on the introduction of a childcare and early years programme to remove barriers to work for (lone) mothers and bring all children into collective 'educare' as early as possible.

### ***'Meeting the Childcare Challenge': The National Childcare Strategy***

The Green Paper published in 1998, 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998) introduced the first ever National Childcare Strategy in the UK. Three key problems were identified: the variable quality of childcare provision; high costs of childcare; and lack of childcare places and insufficient information about availability. The overall aim was:

To ensure good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood...the Strategy is founded on a commitment to promoting the well-being of children, offering equal opportunities to parents, especially women and to supporting parents in balancing work and family life.

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<sup>8</sup>. See below for a discussion of how 'educare' has been carried forward in more recent developments.

<sup>9</sup> The most influential research was the EPPE 'The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project', a European longitudinal study. The results of the pre-school phase are reported in (Sylva et al. 2003). However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the evidence of the benefits of collective childcare for very children was less conclusive. The (FCCC) longitudinal study concluded that for children under age 2, spending long periods of the week in day nurseries could result in insecure attachment - see (Leach 1997) for a summary of this debate.



The 'Three Steps to a National Childcare Strategy', addressed each of these problems with a commitment to raising the quality of care, making childcare more affordable, and more accessible. The specific objectives under each of these steps are summarised as follows:

**Raising the quality of care:**

Explicit plans to integrate early education and childcare were introduced in this context with a promise of at least 25 new pilot Early Excellence Centres in the first year, to provide models of good quality integrated 'educare'. The Government also promised a more consistent regulatory regime and new standards for early education and childcare. In recognition of the need to raise standards in the childcare workforce, they also introduced a new training and qualifications framework for childcare workers and more opportunities to train, linking this to the New Deal for Lone Parents initiative, promising up to 50,000 places to New Deal participants to train towards National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or other approved childcare qualifications.

**Making childcare more affordable:**

In the late 1990s, the typical cost of a childminder looking after a two year old was almost £90 per week (over £4,500 a year). Full time day nurseries were more expensive with a typical cost of £110 per week (£5,700) rising to £135 (over £7,000) a year in parts of London and the South East (Daycare Trust 2001). In the Green Paper, the main strategy proposed to help parents with these high childcare costs was to be arranged through the introduction of the new 'Childcare Tax Credit' (CCTC) for working families as part of the Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC) system (which replaced the old Family Credit). The Childcare Tax Credit proposal was to cover up to 70 per cent of eligible registered childcare costs up to a maximum of £70 per week for one child and £105 for families with two or more children. The tax credits were targeted at the lowest income families<sup>10</sup> and to qualify for help with the costs of childcare, the parent or parents had to be in receipt of WFTC and both parents or a lone parent had to be working at least 16 hours per week.

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<sup>10</sup> For example to qualify for the full 70 per cent of childcare costs, a couple with two children would have had to have an income below £17,000 per annum.

**Making childcare more accessible by increasing places and improving childcare information:**

The main emphasis in this area was to encourage a "...diversity of childcare provision to meet parents' preferences." (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998 pp.7). When New Labour was elected in 1997 there were 637,700 registered places (this included childminders, full day nurseries and out-of-school clubs) for the 5.1 million children under age 8 in England (Table 3.2). The Government pledged to increase registered childcare, focusing particularly on new out-of school clubs and providing £300 million from the Lottery in the form of the New Opportunities Fund to set up new out-of-school clubs over five years. They also increased funding for existing clubs to provide an estimated 40,000 extra places and to train more staff. There was also an initial funding of £6 million to provide an additional 10,000 childcare places for younger children. Targets for early education places focused initially on 4 year olds, stating that by September 1998 every 4 year old would have the chance of a free (part-time) education place. To improve information for parents about childcare services the Government's plans also included the introduction of local and national Childcare Information Services (CIS), providing up-to-date details about availability and quality of childcare services and advice on financial support towards the cost of childcare.

**Table 3.2 – Childcare provision in England In 1997**

	<b>Number of providers (registered)</b>	<b>Places for children (registered)</b>
<b>Childminders</b>	98,500	365,200
<b>Full daycare</b>	6,100	193,800
<b>Out of school clubs</b>	2,600	78,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>107,200</b>	<b>637,700</b>

Source: Ofsted - in: (Daycare Trust 2004b)



In the 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge' Green Paper, the Government also expressed its wish to, "...promote measures which enable parents to balance paid work with the needs of their children." (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998, p.49). They claimed to be developing a 'package of measures' relating to 'family-friendly' working practices to allow parents to spend more time with their children and promised a review of maternity and paternity leave<sup>11</sup>. Arguing that, "The business case for 'family-friendly' policies is becoming more compelling as patterns of work and family life continue to change." (ibid, p 49), the proposals to promote work-life balance were to be considered in relation to the needs of businesses. Consequently, recommendations were presented together in a follow up Green Paper entitled, 'Work & Parents: Competitiveness and Choice' (H M Government (Department of Trade and Industry) 2000).

### ***Local responsibility: Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships***

Consistent with the mixed economy approach to childcare (Penn and Randall 2005), the Government decided to implement the National Childcare Strategy through local public/private partnerships<sup>12</sup>. This was achieved by expanding already established Early Years Development Partnerships in each local authority. From 1998, these local partnerships became Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) with additional responsibility for childcare provision and the production of a yearly strategic childcare plan in accordance with guidance from the Department of Education and Employment<sup>13</sup>. The EYDCPs were independent, including members from the maintained, private and voluntary childcare sectors, as well as employers, higher educational institutions and schools, health authorities and with representation from parents. While the Local Authority employed the EYDCP Lead Officer who was responsible for convening and supporting the partnership, it was specifically stated that, "It is important, however, that the partnerships are not seen as local authority bodies." (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 1998, pp. 47), and therefore it was recommended that an independent person chaired the partnerships.

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<sup>11</sup> When the Green Paper was published, ordinary maternity leave in the UK was 14 weeks with a qualification period of two years service to be eligible to additional (unpaid) maternity leave. Fathers had no legal right to paternity leave although some employers offered this, usually on an unpaid basis.

<sup>12</sup> Supporting public/private partnerships is consistent with New Labour's 'Third Way' agenda which seeks policy solutions that are neither attached to Old Labour's emphasis on public provision or to the New Right's total commitment to the Market. However, as commented elsewhere, this approach is not necessarily appropriate for childcare provision (Penn and Randall 2005) (Ball and Vincent 2005).

<sup>13</sup> This department has since changed to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

Of particular relevance to this study was the establishment of the Newcastle upon Tyne EYDCP in September 1998. Following the strategic principles set out in the guidance papers issued by the Department for Education and Employment, of *quality, affordability, diversity, accessibility* and *partnership*, Newcastle EYDCP, like all local partnerships, had to produce a partnership plan showing how, "...progress would be made in meeting the local shortfalls in childcare, in terms of places, infrastructure and capacity..." (Department for Education and Employment 1998, pp.1). The plan also had to include details of progress towards the targets of ensuring that all parents of four year olds had access to a good quality, free (part-time) early education place. However, as the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had a duty to secure these early education places by 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999, the EYDCP's focus was on childcare provision for two main groups: 0-3 year olds and 3-14 year olds.

After carrying out a local audit in Newcastle, existing formal provision was identified (table 3.3) and the audit also revealed that complementary childcare provided by family (55 per cent ) and friends (16 per cent) was the most commonly used childcare (Newcastle EYDCP 1999a). With this baseline information available, a decision was made by Newcastle EYDCP to investigate further the role of complementary childcare<sup>14</sup> and initial targets were set to increase and improve childcare provision for 0-3 year old through childminding networks. The introduction of Sure Start programmes in disadvantaged areas of the city, working in conjunction with New Deal initiatives, also provided some scope for the development of collective full daycare provision for the under three's through family centres. For the 3-14 year old group, efforts were concentrated on development of out-of-school clubs using the allocated New Opportunities Fund to establish new and expand existing facilities.

**Table 3.3 – Childcare provision in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1999**

	<b>Number of providers (registered)</b>	<b>Places for children (registered)</b>
<b>Childminders</b>	430	1,332
<b>Full daycare</b>	25	1,084
<b>Out of school clubs</b>	25	845
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>3,261</b>

Source: (Newcastle EYDCP 1999a)

<sup>14</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, to enable them to develop appropriate services for parents in Newcastle, the local partnership initiated and supported this study of complementary childcare presented in collaboration with Newcastle University, as part of a PhD ESRC CASE Studentship.



During these early stages of development and implementation, the Government also introduced the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative in 2001, which continued the 'child poverty' and 'welfare to work' agendas and was aimed at the promotion of collective childcare in disadvantaged areas<sup>15</sup>. This initiative was targeted in the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas of the country<sup>16</sup> and Newcastle EYDCP began work immediately to increase the number of childcare places available in order to close the gap in childcare provision between disadvantaged and advantaged geographical areas by 2004. Within the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative remit, this had to be achieved by creating new, and increasing existing, places in day nurseries, ideally using the model of integrated nursery education, family support and affordable childcare offered by Early Excellence Centres. Again, within the mixed economy approach, the focus was on expanding private childcare provision through New Opportunities Fund subsidies and providing support with running costs for the first three years<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Failing the childcare challenge? Concerns and criticisms***

While the introduction of a National Childcare Strategy was welcomed as a commendable step in the right direction, there were concerns in a number of areas about how far this would improve the situation for parents and children in the UK (Cabinet office 2002) (Penn and Randall 2005) (Lewis 2003). It was also clear that the UK had a long way to go to bring it up to the standards of some other European countries in terms of child poverty, gender empowerment and female employment. However, of particular importance for childcare provision was the UK's continued poor performance compared to other countries where the commitment to universal childcare and early years provision remained high and parents were well supported financially and socially in their choices about work and parenting (see table 3.1 above for comparisons with Denmark and Sweden).

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<sup>15</sup> Again this approach had links to the 'early start' aspect of Sure Start as it was felt children from disadvantaged areas would benefit from a collective childcare environment in terms of improvement of social, cognitive and emotional development.

<sup>16</sup> To remind the reader, one of the wards selected for this study (Walker) was one of these 20 per cent disadvantaged areas.

<sup>17</sup> In the first year support with running costs was 50 per cent, reducing to 30 per cent in the second year and 10 per cent in the third year by which time it was hoped the facility would be sustainable.

Those commenting on the disappointing performance of the National Childcare Strategy in the UK focused criticisms on the overemphasis on the employment of certain groups (especially lone mothers) and educational needs of mainly disadvantaged children, driven by the 'welfare to work' and 'child poverty' agendas (Lewis 2003). While the aim of social inclusion targeted at those most in need was admirable, this also presented problems. In the first instance, confining support through Sure Start to certain geographical areas overlooked the statistics which showed that almost half (46%) of children living in poverty in the UK were not living in the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas (Daycare Trust 2004a).

Furthermore, this emphasis on disadvantaged children from lone mother households meant that only marginal attention was given to the full daycare needs of the wider population of working families, especially for children 0-3 years<sup>18</sup>. While admittedly, there was a substantial increase in the number of universally available free (part-time) early education places for 3 and 4 year olds<sup>19</sup>, the initial guaranteed 12 and a half hours per week could not be used as 'childcare' for work purposes and parents often had to make more complex childcare arrangements around this part-time provision. There was also a lack of commitment to work-life balance through family-friendly policies, which could have facilitated parents in remaining childcare self-sufficient<sup>20</sup>, and while there were changes to maternity rights in 1999/2000<sup>21</sup>, little attention was paid to the improvement or promotion of flexible working hours. Moreover, there was no action taken regarding the role of fathers<sup>22</sup> highlighting the clear omission in the National Childcare Strategy of policies to promote gender equality in the workplace or the household (Penn and Randall 2005).

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<sup>18</sup> Increased provision of out-of-school clubs for older children was generally beneficial to many more families across a range of incomes. However, the aim of affordable full daycare for younger children was not achieved. (See below for a further discussion of the failure of CCTC).

<sup>19</sup> These were initially aimed at 4 year olds and targets were achieved by end of 2000. It was then expanded to all 3 year olds and this was achieved by 2004. Furthermore, for children aged 3 years in an approved private day nursery, parents have also been able to claim the equivalent costs of a part-time early education place in the form of Nursery Grants.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 6 for evidence from this study of a strong preference for childcare self-sufficiency.

<sup>21</sup> In 1999 Ordinary Maternity leave increased from 14 to 18 weeks with a reduction to a one-year qualification period of service for eligibility for Additional Maternity leave.

<sup>22</sup> Paid paternity rights for fathers were not introduced until 2003 (see below).



The mixed economy approach to childcare has also attracted criticism beginning with reports of conflicts of interest contributing to poor performance in childcare provision because of the choice of implementation for the National Childcare Strategy through local public/private Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (Penn and Randall 2005) (Cabinet office 2002)<sup>23</sup>. However, where the mixed economy approach has been particularly criticised has been in its emphasis on boosting the market to increase private formal childcare provision through government subsidies (Penn and Randall 2005) (Lewis 2003) (Ball and Vincent 2005) (Duncan et al. 2004)<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, this maintained a 'familialistic' approach by increasing market dependency rather than using funding to increase public nursery provision.

From the parents' perspective, not only did the mixed economy approach produce a complicated mix of demand and supply side funding, the main demand side subsidies in the form of the Childcare Tax Credit (CCTC) component of Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC), failed to deliver in most cases<sup>25</sup>. Despite the provision of up to 70 per cent towards the costs of childcare, very few parents qualified for the full credit and therefore most receiving CCTC were getting on average less than one third of the typical costs of a nursery or childminder place (Daycare Trust 2001). Consequently, the cost of formal childcare for working parents in the UK remained high (parent's share around 75 per cent) compared to other countries (see Table 3.1 above). In addition, even parents who qualified for the full 70 per cent childcare credit (usually lone mothers), had incomes so low that they were not able to meet the 30 per cent parental contribution<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, CCTC was not realistically providing childcare choice to lower income families (Land 2002a) and many moderate-income families either failed to qualify, or were receiving a nominal contribution to their childcare costs.

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<sup>23</sup>There have also been reports of positive aspects of the EYDCP partnerships in terms of bringing together local providers, avoidance of duplication of services and sharing resources. However, more generally evaluations showed that excessive bureaucracy and tensions between public and private providers prevented effective decision making within EYDCPs.

<sup>24</sup> The biggest growth in childcare has been in the private nursery sector, with only around 6 per cent of nurseries which are operated by local authorities as public facilities (Penn and Randall 2005).

<sup>25</sup> The mixed economy of finance, provision and subsidies made application and qualification for CCTC very difficult and on average only 11 to 12 per cent of those claiming WFTC received help with childcare costs (Inland Revenue (Analysis and Research) 2002) (Daycare Trust 2001).

<sup>26</sup> The 30 per cent childcare cost constraint is demonstrated through data presented in Chapter 6.

However, a further important underlying concern regarding the National Childcare Strategy which is especially relevant to this study, was the exclusion of complementary (or informal) childcare provided by family and friends<sup>27</sup>. UK policymakers once again showed a lack of appreciation of the importance of this vital resource to household provisioning. They also failed to acknowledge how patterns of resource sharing cut across physical household boundaries (Mackintosh 2000) (Wheelock et al. 2003) (Oughton et al. 1997). Therefore, using a fixed definition of household boundaries and co-residency, and focusing on the individualistic ‘rational economic *man*’ approach to childcare selection, this ignored the ‘social process’ of collective household decision making to include contributions made by those living elsewhere, such as non-resident grandparents.

Furthermore, this ‘rationality mistake’ (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (Duncan et al. 2003) repeatedly underestimates the influence of socio-cultural, moral and normative factors which lead to preferences for complementary childcare in the first place. Therefore, the assumption is that focusing on financial incentives such as Childcare Tax Credit, will persuade more parents (mothers) to join the workforce and increase demand for private childcare. Unfortunately, not only was CCTC unsuccessful in providing adequate financial support, by excluding complementary childcare it also failed to provide support for those parents (especially mothers struggling to balance their identities as mothers and paid workers) who would only consider leaving their children with a close family member, (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (Wheelock and Jones 2002)<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that CCTC also excluded other forms of unregistered childcare such as nannies and au pairs (these have since been included in the new ‘Home Childcarers Scheme’ introduced in 2004 – see below).

<sup>28</sup> See the following chapters for evidence from this study of preferences for family or friends based on a combination of economic and socio-cultural factors.



While there were some unofficial schemes providing financial support for complementary childcare under New Deal and Sure Start programmes<sup>29</sup>, Childcare Tax Credits were not made available for parents using complementary childcare<sup>30</sup>. Critics of the National Childcare Strategy have argued, therefore, that the Government's focus on supporting only formal childcare ignored parental perceptions and geographical socio-cultural differences regarding childcare preferences (Duncan et al. 2004). Moreover, considering how entrenched these views were in the 'childcare culture' in certain areas of the UK, it also called into question whether increasing the quantity of formal childcare was the correct policy response (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (Duncan et al. 2004) (Wheelock and Jones 2002). This had particularly serious implications for programmes such as the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative which was targeted at disadvantaged areas which studies showed were more likely to be influenced by socio-cultural factors in favour of complementary childcare (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (LaValle et al. 1999).

### **Further developments in childcare policy (2002-2005)**

Considering these concerns and criticisms in the first years of the National Childcare Strategy, it was clear this was very much a 'system in transition' (Lewis 2003, pp 236) and to address the needs of families and children changes had to be made. In 2002, there were positive signs that the Government was taking the criticisms seriously and an inter-departmental review of childcare was conducted involving the Department of Education and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury and the Women & Equality Unit (Cabinet office 2002). In addition, there were other reviews, evaluations and Green Papers which contributed to the debate (H M Government 2003) (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 2004) (Daycare Trust 2003) (Daycare Trust 2004b)<sup>31</sup>. The result was the publication of a new strategy for childcare, 'Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare' (H M Treasury 2004).

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<sup>29</sup> In 2000-2001, The Nottinghamshire County Council was running a Childcare Voucher Scheme for low-income families for parents returning to work or education and this scheme included payment to a 'close family member' as defined in the Children Act 1989. This paid £25 per week for 52 weeks. In addition, the New Deal branch of the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland paid up to 65 per cent of a formal childcare place to pay family members for childcare, also for 52 weeks.

<sup>30</sup> This was consistent with the desire to encourage the use of registered, mainly private childcare, although tax credits could be claimed if complementary childcarers registered as childminders.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that the final reports from this study carried out on behalf of the Newcastle EYDCP and submitted in 2002 (Hall 2002a; Hall 2002b) contributed to this debate by highlighting the extent to which the National Childcare Strategy failed to acknowledge parental preferences by side-stepping the issue of complementary (or informal) childcare (see Daycare Trust paper on 'Informal Childcare: Bridging the childcare gap for families' in which these reports were cited).

The approach and focus of the Ten Year Strategy reflected the recommendations made by the inter-departmental review (Cabinet office 2002) and the Every Child Matters Green paper (H M Government 2003), with a shift in emphasis from the adult worker to the needs of children and the needs of parents to spend more time with their children. The 'Government's vision' was presented as an overarching commitment to ensure that every child gets the best start in life, while giving parents more choice about how to balance work and family life. This was all within the context of 'progressive universalism':

A policy that gives too much emphasis to helping parents work could come at the expense of the needs of children, or of parents' desire to spend more time with their families. ... To be successful, the needs of children and families cannot be traded against the demands of the labour market, but must be advanced together. (H M Treasury 2004, para. 2.4)

The principle underlying the Government's vision for childcare is progressive universalism: help for all and additional support targeted on those who need it most. (ibid para. 7.1)

Continuing with the themes introduced in the National Childcare Strategy, a number of measures were proposed to promote and improve quality, availability and affordability of childcare while also including a section on choice and flexibility in balancing work and family. In particular, within the new 'family-friendly' section of choice and flexibility, there were some significant changes to maternity and paternity rights. Already in 2003, ordinary maternity leave had increased to 6 months, along with the introduction of 2 weeks paid paternity leave for fathers and new legal rights for parents to request flexible working hours<sup>32</sup>. The Ten Year Strategy announced promising plans to increase maternity leave further to 9 months by April 2007, with a longer-term goal of 12 months paid maternity by 2010, in combination with legislation to give mothers the right to transfer a proportion of this paid leave to fathers.

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<sup>32</sup> See below for a discussion of the limitations of the 'right to request' legislation.



To address concerns about access to services for all children (not just those living in the 20 per cent disadvantaged areas targeted in the National Childcare Strategy) plans were introduced to combine programmes such as Early Excellence Centres, Sure Start and Neighbour Nurseries Initiative, to create Sure Start Children's Centres to provide integrated education, care, family support and health services. The overall goal was a Children's Centres in every community, with 2,500 to be in place by 2008 and 3,500 by 2010. To improve availability for all families, and again in accordance with the vision of integrated 'educare', plans were also introduced for a phased extension of free early education for 3 and 4 year olds. This was to increase from 12 and a half to 15 (moving to 20) hours per week for 38 weeks per year and with proposals to make these hours flexible so parents could use them at any time throughout the week. There were further plans to extend out-of-school provision by 2010 to make it available between the hours of 8am to 6pm for 48 weeks per year<sup>33</sup>.

In terms of quality of childcare and early years provision, the Ten Year Strategy also announced further reforms of the regulation and inspection regimes to improve standards. However, the most radical 'quality' reform proposed was in relation to the childcare workforce, recognising the crisis in low standards, problems with recruitment and low levels of pay. A Children's Workforce Development Council was set up to consider a new qualification and career structure with an overall aim of ensuring that all full daycare settings are eventually managed by graduate professionals with an appropriate childcare related university qualification.

Meanwhile, recognising that one of the most challenging obstacles to overcome in terms of access to childcare remained affordability, increases in the limits of the Childcare Tax Credit (CCTC) component of the revised Working Tax Credit were also announced<sup>34</sup>. From April 2005, the limits increased to £175 for one child and £300 for families with two or more children, with the proportion of costs that could be claimed rising from 70 per cent to 80 per cent. There were also proposed rises in the qualifying income threshold to increase the number of families eligible to claim the childcare component<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> For more information on 'educare' proposals and extended out-of-school provision see (H M Government (Department for Education and Skills) 2004).

<sup>34</sup> In April 2003, Working Families' Tax Credit was replaced by Working Tax Credit for all low income workers with a separate Child Tax Credit for those with children. The Childcare Tax Credit component of Working Tax Credit remained in place for those who had qualified (ie, both parents or lone parent working 16 hours per week and using registered childcare).

<sup>35</sup> In real terms, for a couple family on £34,000 a year with both parents working and typical childcare costs for two children, these reforms only marginally reduced the proportion of costs the parents pay for childcare from 85 per cent to 75 per cent per annum (Daycare Trust 2005).

Therefore, it seemed the Ten Year Strategy presented a considerable improvement to the initial National Childcare Strategy, setting out a long-term commitment to children and families. Furthermore, this commitment was formalised in legislation in the first ever ‘Childcare Bill’ (House of Commons 2005) developed to take forward the range of measures and proposals outlined in the Ten Year Strategy. Consequently, by 2005, the Government was reporting successes having reached the targets of a free, part-time early education place for all 3 and 4 year olds and significant increases in the number of registered childcare places (table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 – Childcare provision in England 1997 and 2005**

	Number of providers (registered)		Places for children (registered)	
	1997	2005	1997	2005
<b>Childminders</b>	98,500	71,100	365,200	319,700
<b>Full daycare</b>	6,100	12,600	193,800	542,900
<b>Out of school clubs</b>	2,600	10,200	78,700	358,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>107,200</b>	<b>93,900</b>	<b>637,700</b>	<b>1,220,700</b>

Source: Ofsted - in: (Daycare Trust 2004b) and (Ofsted 2005)

Nevertheless, while commendable steps in the right direction, the Ten Year Strategy has also attracted criticisms for its failure to address key issues which continue to have consequences for UK families. For example, parents who want to take time off when their children are very young will indeed welcome the proposed improvements to parental leave. However, inequalities remain as studies have shown that the uptake of maternity leave is linked to levels of payment and with maternity pay in the UK amongst the lowest in Europe (Daycare Trust 2005)<sup>36</sup>, this may lead to further polarisation with only the better off being able to take extended parental leave (Duncan et al. 2004). In addition, if as the Government claim their aim is a “truly family-friendly” welfare state<sup>37</sup>, parents need a firmer commitment than the ‘right to request’ flexible working. As commented elsewhere, the ‘right to request’ was not accompanied by a legal requirement for employers to accept the request, or by legislation to ensure against discrimination therefore making it clear that the needs of business and employers continued to take priority (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004).

<sup>36</sup> In 2005, mothers were entitled to 26 weeks paid ordinary maternity leave paid at 90% of average earnings for six weeks, followed by a flat rate of £106 per week for 20 weeks. Women with 26 week continuous service could also take additional (unpaid) maternity leave for a further 26 weeks.

<sup>37</sup> This was announced in a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in 2004 Spending Review - as cited in (Daycare Trust 2005, p.8, note 3).



Ongoing problems with Childcare Tax Credit were also reported as this system continued to fail most UK parents who were still paying the vast majority (or all) of their registered childcare costs (Daycare Trust 2004b). While improved maternity and paternity leave will potentially cover the first year of the child's life<sup>38</sup>, there remains very little assistance with costs of childcare for the most expensive period when children are aged one up to age 3 when they are entitled to a free, part-time early education place. Furthermore, even when children reach age 3, this guaranteed part-time place, even if increased to 15 or 20 hours per week, may continue to be of little use to working parents unless as suggested, parents have the right to use these hours at any time throughout the week. If this is possible in practice then a parent working part-time could potentially use the free early education place to allow them to work for 2 or 3 full days per week. However, it remains unclear how primary school nurseries in particular would manage a complex attendance scheme of this kind and only time will tell if parents will be afforded this flexibility when their children start nursery at age 3.

However, where the Ten Year Strategy continued to be decidedly limited in its approach is the ongoing assumption that childcare is purely economic and that parents (especially mothers) see themselves as primarily workers (Duncan et al. 2004). While some consideration has been given to the wider social and moral elements of childcare by proposing measures to allow parents to spend more time with their children, especially during the first year of life, complementary childcare has remained excluded. This is despite an ongoing debate about the benefits of providing financial support to retain the services of complementary childcarers who continue to provide vital contributions to economic survival (Wheelock and Jones 2002) (Land 2002b). In fact, the Ten Year Strategy was more explicit stating that,

...it is not the Government's role to offer financial support for care that is freely given within families and it would also be extremely intrusive to make appropriate checks for payments between family members or friends. (H M Treasury 2004, para 5.14)

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<sup>38</sup> Although as discussed above this may be limited to those who can afford to take extended leave.

Family members were also excluded from the new 'Home Childcarers' scheme in 2004<sup>39</sup>, and although the Government had set a precedent for paying for care previously provided 'freely' within families through Invalid Care Allowance<sup>40</sup>, it was clear that financial support to pay for complementary childcare was not forthcoming and it remained excluded from the Childcare Tax Credit system<sup>41</sup>. While it could be argued that this is consistent with the position of some other European countries, it must also be appreciated that in countries with universal state provided childcare as a culturally accepted norm, the use of complementary childcare as an exclusive form of childcare is very low (OECD 2005). However, there are also countries that are now recognising the contribution of complementary childcarers by offering more choice to parents by allowing them to use state funds to pay family members<sup>42</sup>.

In the UK, with limited state provided childcare combined with the high costs of private provision, parents have turned to family members and this has contributed to the childcare culture in the UK creating an economic reliance on complementary childcare while also reinforcing socio-cultural preferences for close family in particular. Unfortunately, continuing the assumption that this childcare is 'freely given', once again fails to recognise or acknowledge the social and economic costs of complementary childcare<sup>43</sup>. For example, many complementary childcarers are grandmothers who are increasingly being constructed as substitute childcarers while mothers work. However, this shift in focus to 'political grandmotherhood' on which not only parents but also the UK economy has become increasingly dependent<sup>44</sup>, leaves grandmothers unprotected in terms of their pension rights and this has serious implications for those who might leave the workforce early to provide childcare to their grandchildren<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> In March 2004, a voluntary, 'Home Childcarers' scheme was introduced for the approval of childcarers that were not regulated by Ofsted so that families could claim CCTC. However, it was clearly stated that this was for nannies or au pairs employed by parents or an agency looking after children in the child's own home and this 'light touch' scheme was not to be used for family members.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 2 and <http://www.direct.gov.uk/CaringForSomeone/fs/en> for further details.

<sup>41</sup> This is despite the fact that some complementary childcarers continued to provide childcare in excess of the 35 qualifying hours per week required under the Invalid Care Allowance scheme.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Norway has a Cash Benefit Scheme which can be used for a parent to stay home or to pay for childcare provided by relatives. Similarly, in France, there is tax-relief available under the Allowance for Childcare in the Home scheme which can be used to pay family childcarers (Fagnani 2003) and even the USA where state provision for childcare is limited, the Choices Act 1999 permits the use of government funds to pay close family for childcare (Brandon 2000).

<sup>43</sup> This includes potential damage to long term family relationships due to underlying tension and conflict - see Chapter 7 where the 'Family childcare relationship' is explored in more detail.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 2 for a related discussion of 'political grandmotherhood'.

<sup>45</sup> While Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) is available to reduce the number of qualifying years needed for state pension for parents who take time out of work to care for children, there is no such protection for grandparents who might jeopardise their final pension by leaving work early to provide childcare.



Furthermore, considering complementary childcare as 'free' from the policymakers' perspective, based on the widely held assumption that complementary childcare would be provided anyway whether the Government paid or not (Land 2002b), once again relies on out-dated notions of family obligation which research has shown is now more likely to be negotiated and conditional (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999). Therefore, policymakers need to be aware that in the future complementary childcarers may not be prepared or available<sup>46</sup> to offer high levels of childcare support, especially if it remains taken-for-granted and undervalued.

## Conclusions

An important first step in the development of childcare and early years policies in the UK has been the acknowledgement of the importance of these services to the economy to allow parents to work but also in terms of giving children the best start in life to improve the prospects for future generations. To achieve this, the New Labour Government, since 1997, has introduced a number of ambitious objectives with positive shifts in the right direction, especially in the more recent childcare policy outlined in the Ten Year Strategy. Therefore, having considered the low starting point from which policies were developed, it would be unjust not to acknowledge the daunting task New Labour faced in 1997 and the progress made in producing the first ever National Childcare Strategy.

Nevertheless, problems remain and as discussed throughout this chapter the UK has a long way to go to achieve the aims of improving child poverty, equality and childcare provision. Meanwhile, even with new proposals to improve maternity and paternity rights parents in the UK, especially mothers, continue to struggle to reconcile caring for their children with paid work with only a moderate commitment to facilitating parental childcare self-sufficiently through flexible working arrangements. In terms of childcare costs, the attempts to provide financial support to pay for substitute childcare have been disappointing, as has the continued exclusion of complementary childcare from the Childcare Tax Credit system.

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<sup>46</sup> The conclusions chapter considers clashes with more recent New Labour policy agendas (in particular the promotion of employment among over 50s) which calls into question the future availability of grandmothers as childcarers (Gray 2005).

The fieldwork data produced from this study of complementary childcare and presented in later chapters allows these issues to be explored using real-life examples of how parents make decisions about childcare within the context of social and economic constraints they face while also considering the impact of government policies on these decisions. In particular, through the data it is possible to consider the concerns and criticisms regarding childcare policy in the UK as discussed in this chapter from the perspectives of parents' and complementary childcarers' allowing them to provide their views of where the Government might be failing to support families in the UK. However, before moving on to present this data, the following chapter provides a full description of the methodology and methods used to produce the data and a chronological account of how the study was carried out.



## **Chapter 4: Ways of knowing and doing: Methodology and methods**

This chapter describes and makes transparent the research process for this study of complementary childcare in the North East of England. The chapter is in two parts, the first dealing with epistemological and methodological issues and the second providing a reflexive, chronological account of the stages of the research. Methodology and choice of methods is central to part one, as selection of appropriate methods to match the research questions is an important first step towards validity in research (Mason 1996). However, choice of methods must be supported by a methodological framework which guides the researcher on issues such as, "...who to study, how to study, which institutional practices to adopt...how to write and which knowledges to use" (Skeggs 1997, pp. 17). Skeggs goes on to argue that,

To side step methodology means that the mechanisms we utilise in producing knowledge are hidden, relations of privilege are masked and knowers are not seen to be located: therefore the likely abundance of cultural, social, educational and economic capitals is not recognised as central to the production of any knowledge. (Skeggs 1997, pp.17)

The basis for my methodological framework is presented here, describing how, as a woman with strong socialist and feminist beliefs, I found myself asking some crucial questions about my ethical position and what I considered valid knowledge. In particular, as a feminist doing feminist research which required, in my opinion, the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, I had to determine where my views 'sat' within the quantitative versus qualitative paradigm debate, especially the suggestion that quantitative methods are 'anti-feminist' (Reinharz 1992) (Stanley and Wise 1993).

In order to take responsibility for 'knowledge' produced I have also attempted to 'locate' myself by being personally reflexive about my own life history and position at the time of the study. This is presented at the beginning of part one where I also introduce the ethical framework for the research, which is intricately linked to the production of responsible knowledge, from research design through to analysis and reporting of data. Finally, part one also addresses the methodological issues that were specific to this area of study such as difficulties with operational definitions of 'complementary childcare' and the 'household'<sup>1</sup>.

The second part of this chapter provides a transparent account of how the study was carried out and the particular problems faced at each stage. It also describes my reflexive journey throughout the course of the study, by constantly questioning my position and influence at the questionnaire design stage, during the interviews and while interpreting and representing the data. The three stages of the study involved participants with specific characteristics which are important to understanding the data. Therefore, an overview of each 'sample' is provided as the stages are described. The chapter finishes with an examination of analytical tools used to interpret the data and a discussion of rigour and validity in social research.

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<sup>1</sup> The conceptual definitions are presented in Chapter 2 which informed the operational definitions discussed in this chapter and used in the study.



## PART ONE

### Locating the 'knower'

In this section I will illustrate how I questioned my various 'positionings' and their influences on each stage of the research process. All researchers have certain pre-conceptions and personal views about the research with which they are involved, based on their own life experiences and while it is hoped that they enter the research with an 'open mind', it would be naïve to think they can hold a completely objective or neutral position. To minimise researcher bias, systematic and rigorous methods of analysis should be employed where data is used to question and test the researcher's values and assumptions rather than simply trying to find data to suit the purpose (DeVaus 1995). This is discussed in detail in the last section of this chapter. However, here I attempt to make transparent the reflexive process which I undertook by asking some difficult questions about how my life history would influence this study (Mason 1996) and how, as my personal circumstances changed, so did my 'position'.

I started this project as a mature ESRC PhD CASE student, returning to the department where I had completed my Social Policy undergraduate degree four years previously. As a woman with no children, I had no personal experience of using any type of childcare. Therefore, the first reflexive challenge for me was to think about my views in relation to childcare. While I had not had any experience of using childcare it had, however, had an influence on how I had viewed my personal life and my career and at the outset of the project I was 38-year-old woman who had repeatedly delayed childbearing in part because of lack of childcare options<sup>2</sup>. As mature students for a number of years, my partner and I had not been financially able to consider having children. When we initially started earning, we were not earning enough to cover the costs of childcare or to allow us to live on one income. Furthermore, I had not wanted to give up paid work, as it was an important part of my personal identity. In terms of preferences for childcare, my partner and I had never really considered family childcare as we both felt we would be more comfortable with a day nursery because of the social and educational elements.

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<sup>2</sup> This was also influenced by my previous labour market career having worked for many years in private industry, in both the UK and Canada, in the notoriously male dominated financial services sector.

These views of childcare are reflected in my position as a socialist and a feminist. As a socialist, I hold a particular ethical position about distribution of wealth and collective responsibility. As a feminist, I believe in equal opportunities for women both in the home and in the workplace. Access to childcare, especially affordable childcare, is a vital component in these areas to improve opportunities for lower income families and for mothers who, I believe, should have the option to (re)enter the labour market if they choose to do so. My personal views changed during the course of the study, especially when I became a mother, but at the beginning of this project, these were my particular positions regarding work, motherhood and childcare.

To explore how these positions influenced the research, in the early stages I drew on my socialist and feminist beliefs to consider what I thought to be ethical and moral approaches to the study. To translate these into practice, I established a set of ethical principles that I followed regardless of the consequences for the study (Kimmel 1988). These included respecting parents' confidentiality regarding access to contact details and stressing voluntary participation. Furthermore, to ensure that parents were able to make an informed decision about taking part in the study, I was transparent about its purpose and the proposed use of the findings while being careful to judge the amount and type of information provided so as not to bias responses to questions (DeVaus 1995)<sup>3</sup>. I was also aware of and sensitive to issues relating to socio-economic status during questionnaire design and interviews<sup>4</sup> and careful not to stereotype regarding gendered roles of caring, ensuring that this study was open to fathers and mothers. With regard to my views about work and childcare, throughout the study I kept these views separate from the process by designing questions that covered a range of circumstances and by remaining impartial about these specific issues during face-to-face interviews. The details of these specific ethical considerations during sampling, interviewing and the handling of confidential data are described at each stage in part two of this chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to information leaflets and letters sent to participants prior to interview. I carefully considered the wording so as not to be leading or suggestive towards a particular view of complementary childcare.

<sup>4</sup> As an example, there were respondents in the study who were dependent on benefits and questions were asked about plans for (re)entering the workplace. However, I stressed that this was in connection to access and decisions about childcare as at no time did I want them to feel I was being judgemental or pressurising them into entering the labour market.



With regard to interaction with participants, my ethical approach was rooted in an acknowledgement of the potential power imbalance during the interview process. Ann Oakley's acclaimed article questioning the 'research hierarchy' (Oakley 1981) has been instrumental in changing the way researchers view power within the research relationship. This is particularly the case when a researcher may possess certain aspects of privilege such as cultural, social, educational and economic capitals (Bourdieu 1983). It is for this reason that Bourdieu would advocate a 'matching' of interviewer and interviewee to facilitate a form of 'non-violent communication' where imbalances of linguistic and symbolic capitals in particular are minimised (Bourdieu 1999b). Fortunately, as a local woman from a working class household, I was socially very close to many of the participants in this study. Because of our common backgrounds, the result was a mutual acknowledgement of shared understanding of certain forms of communication, views and feelings. I believe this created a less threatening and intrusive interview environment where the effects of symbolic violence were reduced as much as possible (Bourdieu 1999b). While I was never under any illusion that the interviewees viewed me as a 'friend', I do believe they viewed me as 'one of them' and this helped to address issues of perceived power and privilege. However, I also interviewed those from a middle-class background and while I did not share a similar life history to these participants, my access to certain educational and linguistic capitals allowed me to oscillate between the two groups quite easily.

To complete this account of my reflexive journey during my PhD, I turn to the life-changing event which altered my views and changed my perspective in terms of my priorities and personal identity. In the third year of my PhD, I became pregnant and following a very difficult pregnancy with complications that unfortunately threatened my own life and that of my baby, I finally became the mother of a beautiful and healthy baby boy in April 2002. In terms of my PhD, this turned out to be the most reflexive part of the process as I suddenly began to experience personally the situations described to me by participants. I had to make my own decisions about childcare and work and found, surprisingly, that while work was still very important to me, it was no longer a main priority. Furthermore, when I was faced with leaving my five-month-old son for the first time, I found it difficult to remember why I thought day nurseries would be a better option than 'family' as I could not imagine leaving my young baby with anyone other than his grandmother. My personal identity as a mother had added to and altered my position.



This change in my life and personal circumstances truly demonstrated to me the extent to which a researcher is part of the research process. In this study, I have tried to do justice and represent the participants as accurately as possible by making the process of analysis and interpretation transparent. To minimise my biases I used rigorous and systematic methods of analysis by employing empirical and theoretical frameworks to explore the data and constantly using the data to question my assumptions and personal views. A full account of this process is provided in the last section of this chapter. However, I finish this section by acknowledging that if I had completed this study without having experienced motherhood, the 'final product' may have been very different. This illustrates the importance of understanding and locating the person responsible for the production of knowledge and the necessity for transparency throughout the research process. The following section completes the process of locating my position by describing the epistemological basis for the methodology used in this study.

## **The paradigm 'wars' and feminist methodology**

The goal of an emancipatory (social) science calls for us to abandon sterile word-games and concentrate on the business in hand, which is how to develop the most reliable and democratic ways of knowing...and to ensure that those who intervene in other people's lives do so with the most benefit and the least harm. (Oakley 2000, pp. 3)

This section deals with some of the methodological issues that presented challenges when choosing appropriate methods for use in the study. I begin by describing the methodological basis for my choice of methods and central to my concerns was the ongoing 'paradigm wars' which Oakley is referring to in the above quotation. The problems lie in the seemingly polar positions where all quantitative research is described as positivistic, deductive and objective, seen in direct opposition to the interpretativist, inductive and subjective nature of qualitative research. There has also been a 'gendering of methodology' (Oakley 2000) with the suggestion that all quantitative methods are anti-feminist as they obscure the subjective experience and are biased in favour of the male perspective. The argument continues that only methods under the qualitative paradigm are suitable for feminist research and for interviewing women (Reinharz 1992) (Stanley and Wise 1993).



For a researcher faced with this barrage of apparently competing descriptions of the two methodological paradigms, it is, as Oakley has pointed out, very easy to be persuaded that you are dealing with "...two contrasting accounts of how people 'know'." (Oakley 2000, pp. 25). In terms of theories of truth, quantitative methods and the apparent quest for 'hard data' implies a realist epistemology that accepts universal truths, linked to causal laws, numbers and probabilities, and a belief that "...the world has an existence independent of our perception of it." (Williams and May 1996 pp. 81). On the other hand, the qualitative approach which focuses on the singularity of the individual subjective experience has links to idealism, seeing truth or reality as context-bound and therefore 'relative', arguing that it is possible for multiple truths or constructions to exist (Guba 1990).

There are, of course, problems with both of these positions when viewed at the extreme. In the first instance, I think it is unreasonable to take a realist position of absolute 'truth' or certainty, as perceptions of what constitutes truth will vary according to the position and subjective experience of the individual. In addition, the realist suggestion that there can be a value-free and neutral subject-object relationship in social research ignores the personal histories, values and beliefs of the researcher, which will inevitably influence the way in which the research is carried out. However, an idealist position that relies heavily on radical relativism is also unreasonable in that it poses serious problems for social researchers questioning the usefulness of research findings (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). As Hammersley has argued, if there are, as suggested by radical relativism, as many realities as there are individuals, then "...what is the point in spawning yet more versions of 'reality'...and why should some 'realities' be published and discussed at the expense of others?" (Hammersley 1992a, pp.49).

When searching for a practical solution to these epistemological issues, I found Hammersley's proposition of a subtle form of realism useful as it presents a middle ground between the quest for absolute truth on the one hand and extreme relativism on the other, providing a more realistic claim of 'reasonable certainty' (Hammersley 1992a). This is achieved by acknowledging that it is possible to maintain a position that accepts the existence of independent knowable phenomena without assuming we can have absolute certainty about the validity of our 'knowledge'.



This position therefore recognises that knowledge is based on cultural assumptions, and, “We must still view people’s beliefs and actions as constructions, and this includes their accounts of the world *and* those of researchers.” (Hammersley 1992a pp. 53). This aim also resonates in Ann Oakley’s work on methodology especially her more recent contributions to this area (Oakley 2000). She states that “...reality exists” (ibid pp. 323) and although we may see it in different ways, she points out that we all have a common interest in gathering the best knowledge we can. This again reinforces the more worthwhile quest of an emancipatory social science that focuses on the task in hand and is committed to developing reliable and democratic ways of knowing, as the quotation at the beginning of this section suggests.

These arguments move the discussion beyond the obstructive split between the quantitative and qualitative, recognising that while philosophical considerations are important in overall research methodology, it may be misguided to rigidly confine specific methods or techniques to one or another epistemological domain. Research methods should be chosen based on the strengths of the particular method and the practicalities and circumstances of the situation (Oakley 2000) (Hammersley 1992b). It is for this reason, in particular, that I find myself at odds with the feminist arguments against the use of certain methods (Stanley and Wise 1993) (Reinharz 1992). On the one hand I can appreciate the vital role of these feminist arguments in changing the way in which knowledge is produced, moving away from historical masculine bias to recognise and empower women as legitimate owners of knowledge. However, to dismiss certain methods, for example the quantitative survey, as ‘anti-feminist’ ignores the usefulness of this method. Indeed, as Ann Oakley has pointed out, second-wave feminism was prompted by large-scale quantitative surveys that demonstrated the conditions of women’s lives and they continue to show us the extent of discrimination based on gender, class and ethnicity (Oakley 1998). I personally do not subscribe to the notion of anti-feminist methods unless they are developed and used in anti-feminist ways and this can apply to both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In relation to the social survey method, I am in support of ‘quantification for women’ (Oakley 1998) and believe it is possible to adapt this method to fit feminist values and to use it in an ethical way by being sensitive to the position of women during questionnaire design.



Pierre Bourdieu has argued that it is important to 'map out' the field of study and this should include an exploration and acknowledgement of the objective structures that define 'external constraints', which is necessary to enable a more thorough understanding of the individual subjective experience (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996). This is what Bourdieu has referred to as 'structuralist constructivism' or 'constructivist structuralism'<sup>5</sup>, an approach which does not dismiss the importance of the 'real' life experiences of the individual but recognises that, "...the viewpoints of agents will vary systematically with the point they occupy in objective social space." (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996 pp. 11). This is consistent with how I viewed the requirements of this project, recognising that complementary childcare had to be investigated in two different ways. In the first instance, I had to explore the social, economic and political 'objective structures' which influence the subjective experience of parents and their childcare choices. At an empirical level, I also had to establish whether the impressionistic data and scattered evidence from other studies suggesting the high use of complementary childcare (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999) (Marsh and McKay 1993) (Wheelock and Jones 2002) was an accurate description of childcare behaviour. Secondly, I needed to gain some insight into why parents choose certain types of childcare over others and to explore the complexities of childcare decision-making, especially the notions of 'active or preferred choice' and 'force of circumstances'.

It was clear that no single method would achieve my objectives and, based on my requirements to measure and compare the use of different forms of childcare, I decided the quantitative survey was the best method available for this stage of the study. In particular, the main strength of this method was that by using structured questionnaires and asking the same questions, in the same order to all respondents, a structured set of data would be produced. It would then be possible to quantify the use of childcare in a systematic way, providing certain 'facts' and trends in behaviour across a variety of cases that would add to the understanding and overall context of this particular area of study (DeVaus 1995). In particular, it would allow me to test the specific hypothesis that complementary childcare is the most commonly used form of childcare, especially by working parents.

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<sup>5</sup> See the footnote 21 page 11 in (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996) where he discusses his reluctance to define his approach but settles on these terms to describe the relationship between the objective and subjective.

For the other stages of the study, the above approach was not appropriate and therefore other methods, which are more responsive and sensitive to complexity and social context, were used in an attempt to provide a more 'rounded understanding' (Mason 1996) of the parents' and childcarers' subjective experience of complementary childcare. The methods used were focus groups and case studies, utilising the semi-structured interview technique. As a qualitative method, it has been argued that the in-depth interview allows a deeper exploration of opinions, aspirations and feelings by listening to people describe how *they* understand the world in which they live (May 1993) (Rubin and Rubin 1995). It has also been said that it is this rich and contextual data that helps us answer the 'why' questions which are so important to the investigation of a social phenomena. These were the main strengths of this method for this stage of the study, as I wanted to gain further insight into *why* parents preferred complementary childcare, especially 'family childcare'. However, it was also necessary to explore the issues beyond initial 'preference' to see how this may affect family relationships by comparing the experiences and perspectives of parents and complementary childcarers. This would not have been possible using the structured social survey method.

Turning to the specific use of these qualitative methods, the focus groups were used in the first stage of the study in an exploratory capacity. The main purpose was to meet with groups of parents to discuss childcare to help with the design of the survey questionnaire. As small-scale and in-depth group discussions, focus groups can be very useful in this sense to explore a broad set of issues or topics (Krueger 1994; Morgan 1988). Another main advantage of this method at this stage was the explicit use of the interaction between parents, discussing and sharing their experiences of childcare. It has been argued this can facilitate a 'working through' of views and opinions as participants have an opportunity to consider other perspectives (Kitzinger 1994). It has also been argued, especially with reference to feminist research that this method is less hierarchical as power is redistributed from the researcher to the group members and it is a more contextual method as the participants are members of a social group rather than acting in isolation (Wilkinson 1998) (Wilkinson 1999).



My experience of this method is that the 'natural' element should be viewed cautiously and it would be naïve not to recognise that focus groups remain artificially set up situations (Kitzinger 1994). They are not 'naturally occurring' as people have been brought together to discuss specific topics as decided by the researcher. However, I found that by using the 'backseat approach' and allowing the participants the freedom to set their own priorities, it was possible to approximate something close to everyday interactions. A more detailed description of what happened in the focus groups is provided in part two of this chapter.

The final method used for the study was the 'case study', described by Yin (1984) as a way to 'investigate a contemporary phenomenon within the real-life context' using multiple sources of evidence (Yin 1984). The collective case study approach (Stake 2000) was used, concentrating on three case households picked for their particularity to gain a better understanding of families living in those particular circumstances. In case study work, the methods used to produce data can vary, but the aim is to concentrate on the 'case', in as far as possible, in its entirety. To explain this further, Stake 2000 has pointed out that the case is 'an integrated system' with 'working parts' (Stake 2000) and therefore, clearly, to understand it fully you have to look at all parts that make up the whole. For the case studies presented here, looking at the topic from different perspectives was important. For this reason, all those involved in each particular case were interviewed and this included both mothers and fathers and all complementary childcarers<sup>6</sup>. Again, the specific details of how these case studies were set up and carried out, is included in part two.

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<sup>6</sup> Ideally, the children would also be interviewed to gain their views. However, this was not possible because of time constraints

## Who, what and where to study

Having presented my methodological position in terms of choice of methods, this section looks at the methodological issues which were specific to this project and this area of study. In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed the problems of terminology, describing my reasons for using the term 'complementary childcare' to describe unregistered, non-contracted childcare provided by family, friends or neighbours, and introducing the term 'family childcare' when specifically focusing on the family childcare relationship. However, it was also necessary to produce a clear operational definition of complementary childcare in order to design the questionnaire and to decide *who* would be considered as a complementary childcarer, and *what* would count as complementary childcare.

The main distinction for the operational definition was whether the person providing the childcare was registered to look after children<sup>7</sup>. Anyone who was not registered had to be included and equally important, anyone who was registered was to be excluded. Whether the childcare was 'paid for'<sup>8</sup> was not part of the definition with an expectation that most complementary childcare, especially when provided by family members, would be unpaid (Meltzer 1994) (Wheelock and Jones 2002)<sup>9</sup>. Anticipated 'grey areas' that required careful monitoring were situations where a family member or close friend was a registered childminder and they were caring for the children as part of a contracted childminder arrangement. Therefore, when respondents were asked to identify family, friends or neighbours who looked after their children, it had to be made clear that this excluded registered childminders. Further criteria for the operational definition focused on frequency with an aim of obtaining information about complementary childcare provided on a regular, weekly basis defined as at least once per week<sup>10</sup>. The childcare also had to be provided to children aged 11 years or younger and could be for any reason, for example for work purposes, to allow the parents to study or for social reasons.

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<sup>7</sup> In the UK, anyone, other than a close family member, looking after children under the age of 8 for more than 2 hours per day has to register with Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

<sup>8</sup> This refers to payment in cash as it was expected that there would be other forms of payment in kind such as gifts and exchange of services.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 5 for data on payment to complementary childcarers.

<sup>10</sup> While the main aim was to identify regular, weekly childcare, it was also felt to be important to find out about occasional and emergency childcare and therefore a separate section was included in the survey dealing with this area.



Therefore, all family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings, providing childcare on a weekly basis were included as complementary childcarers. Resident parents were not included and this differed from other studies that have included resident fathers (Meltzer 1994) (Marsh and McKay 1993) (Whitherspoon and Prior 1991). Including resident fathers conflicted with the feminist principles on which this study is based as continuing to view fathers as providers of childcare to mothers supports the normative assumption that caring for children is primarily a mother's duty and does not challenge the gendered roles of caring<sup>11</sup>. However, non-resident mothers or fathers were included in order to explore further the changing nature of childcare responsibilities in situations of divorce or separation<sup>12</sup>. Friends or neighbours looking after children at least once per week were also included as long as they were not providing the childcare as a registered childminder.

A further methodological issue was consideration of the unit of analysis for the study which was the 'household'. As a way of identifying the 'unit' for measurement purposes the focus was the child's or children's residence at the time of the study. This was used for sampling and comparative statistical analysis of the different social and economic circumstances of parents and children<sup>13</sup>. However, encompassing the conceptual definition of the household<sup>14</sup>, it was necessary for the analysis to go beyond physical boundaries to explore how negotiations and decision-making incorporates everyone contributing to household provisioning. This was particularly important because of the nature of complementary childcare as a resource being provided by family members, friends or neighbours living elsewhere. Therefore, the 'household' as studied was not confined by rules of co-residency. In the quantitative childcare survey this involved measuring the contribution of complementary childcare provided on a regular, weekly basis by non-resident family, friends and neighbours. In the case study households it involved interviews with everyone contributing to household provisioning which included both parents (if applicable), and again all non-resident complementary childcarers.

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of 'women's work' and the gendered nature of care.

<sup>12</sup> In the statistical analysis in Chapter 5, the role of non-resident parents in childcare is considered separately so that parental and non-parental childcare can be distinguished.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 2, 'Conceptualising the household'.



An important aspect of this study was to be the comparison of childcare used by households living in very different social and economic situations. Identifying these households posed a further methodological problem, as there was a clear connection to issues of social class. Measurement and stratification of 'class' is notoriously difficult not least because of the qualitative and subjective nature of class in terms of transmitted and internalised values and beliefs<sup>15</sup>. However, even the more easily identifiable objective measures used in widely recognised methods of classification based on occupational status have been subject to debate and disagreement (Crompton 1993) (McRae 1990) (Dex 1990)<sup>16</sup>. Considering the difficulties with class identification, and the focus of the study, it was decided that classifications based entirely on the occupation of the head of household (whether this was male or female) was not the right approach. Instead, it was felt to be more appropriate to concentrate on a number of socio-economic factors such as two-parent or lone parent status, levels of employment, household income and access to material assets, all of which reveal levels of inequality. The main aim was to identify a predominately socially and economically disadvantaged area and a more socially stable and affluent area so that comparisons could be made<sup>17</sup>.

Using the Newcastle City Council's categories of city wards, it was possible to identify two wards with very different socio-economic characteristics. These were Dene and Walker wards and they were selected based on data from the 1996 Inter-censal, Newcastle upon Tyne City Profiles, (Newcastle City Council 1997). An overview of the main factors considered when selecting these wards is attached in Appendix 1. However, in summary, using the Index for Local Deprivation from the Newcastle City Profiles, out of 26 city wards, Walker was identified as the second most disadvantaged ward in the city. In comparison Dene scored very low on the index (23<sup>rd</sup> position out of 26 wards), indicating low levels of deprivation.

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<sup>15</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup> The two widely used measurements of social class in the UK, Social Class based on Occupation (SC, formerly Registrar General's Social Class) and Socio-economic Groups (SEG) using 'Goldthorpe's schema', have been the subject of a long-standing debate about the appropriateness of using the occupation of the male head of household to determine the social class stratification of the family unit. The main criticism has been that this approach is sexist and does not reflect the changing role of women in society. This has led to the development of a revised measurement which was introduced in the 2001 Census. The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) replaces both of the previous measurements and while it is still based on occupation, it allows either a male or female to be the 'Household Reference Person (HRP)' and that person's position is used to represent the household.

<sup>17</sup> The association here between socio-economic status and social class is also acknowledged and therefore the disadvantaged area in the study represents the lower social class and the more affluent represents the middle-class experience.



In the first part of this chapter, I have attempted to make my position transparent so that the reader knows 'where I am coming from' especially in terms of my ethical and methodological framework for this study. I have also addressed some of the methodological and definitional problems faced, which was necessary before certain terms could be operationalised for use in the study. In doing so, I have clarified who would be included as complementary childcarers, what would count as complementary childcare and described how the two areas of Newcastle were selected for the comparative element of the study based on differences in socio-economic characteristics. Furthermore, in choosing what I considered appropriate methods, I have illustrated their particular strengths and relevance for achieving the study objectives. It is the application of these methods when undertaking this study, to which I now turn in part two of this chapter, which provides a chronological account of each stage.

## **PART TWO**

This second part of the chapter provides a chronological and reflexive account of how the study was carried out. This includes a description of the ethical considerations, the problems faced and the obstacles overcome in terms of access and sampling<sup>18</sup> and offers insight into my personal experience of conducting the interviews. The specific aims of each stage and the methods used are summarised below (table 4.1) and as discussed in part one, the methods were selected on instrumental grounds and were considered the most appropriate in each situation to address these aims<sup>19</sup>. How each data set was sorted and analysed and finally interpreted and presented, is discussed at the end of this chapter.

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<sup>18</sup> A summary overview of each sample is provided for each stage with a more detailed overview, where appropriate, in the appendices.

<sup>19</sup> See also the discussion in Chapter 1 about the aims of the study and use of methods.

**Table 4.1 – Summary of stages, methods and aims of the study**

<b>Stages and dates</b>	<b>Method used</b>	<b>Aims and objectives</b>
Stage 1 – November 1999	Focus groups in three disadvantaged areas of Newcastle upon Tyne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exploratory work to identify key issues for inclusion in the survey questionnaire</li> </ul>
Stage 2 - June to September 2000	Social survey of a randomly selected sample of households in two city wards of Newcastle upon Tyne (Dene and Walker) with contrasting socio-economic characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide data of the socio-economic differences between the two city wards for comparison purposes</li> <li>▪ To statistically measure all childcare used on a regular, weekly basis for children aged 11 years or younger</li> <li>▪ To describe the interrelationships and patterning between types of childcare and childcarers</li> <li>▪ To confirm the reasons parents used childcare (whether to facilitate employment, study, social reasons or in emergencies).</li> <li>▪ To obtain crucial data about the family members, friends or neighbours providing regular, weekly childcare.</li> </ul>
Stage 3 – September and November 2001	In-depth case studies of three households selected from the survey participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To gain further insight into the complex factors influencing childcare selection</li> <li>▪ To further investigate and attempt to disentangle 'active choice' from 'force of circumstances'</li> <li>▪ To explore the impact of 'family childcare' on family relationships from the perspective of parents and complementary childcarers.</li> </ul>

## **Stage 1 - The focus groups**

The first step in conducting the focus groups was to identify the participants. For this qualitative method, sampling is usually purposive or theoretical (Strauss and Corbin 1990), which is based on factors relevant to the topic of investigation, in this case types of childcare used, as well as specific selection criteria such as age, gender, social class. The aim of this type of sampling is not 'representativeness' in the same sense as one would hope for in probability or random sampling, but instead it is to obtain a wide range of views and opinions from people with different backgrounds. However, it is often necessary to compromise during a research project due to constraints on time and resources. Therefore, as the main purpose of this initial exploratory stage was to discuss more generally with parents what they considered to be the important issues regarding their use and choice of childcare, I used a more opportunistic approach to sampling by taking advantage of already established groups of mothers who met regularly at local family centres.



Members of the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership<sup>20</sup> facilitated access to the groups and the three focus groups took place during November 1999, in the Walker, Byker and Benwell wards of Newcastle upon Tyne, all of which are identified as disadvantaged areas of Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle City Council 1997). For each group, I was invited along to one of the regular meetings and spent an hour to an hour and half with the mothers. I asked and fortunately was given permission by all groups to tape-record the discussions. In accordance with my ethical framework, I gave them my assurance that when reporting or representing the views expressed, no identifiable information would be used<sup>21</sup>. The profiles of the twenty-five mothers who took part are provided in Appendix 2 where pseudonyms have been used to preserve confidentiality. In summary, these included lone mothers as well as those living with a partner. All mothers had at least one child either pre-school or in primary school and a number of the mothers were in paid employment, most of them working part-time hours. All had relied, to a greater or lesser extent, on support with childcare from family or friends.

Once again, in terms of my commitment to an ethical approach to the research, I thought it was very important to be transparent about my position as a PhD student carrying out work on behalf of Newcastle EYDCP. To ensure informed participation, I provided a summary of the purpose of the research and the reasons why it was important to talk to parents about their preferences for childcare, including childcare provided by family and friends. This transparency was also essential to dispel any concerns that the women may have had that I was there to 'check up' on them<sup>22</sup>. As all the women knew each other, the atmosphere in the groups was very relaxed and informal. In addition, most of them had young children in the family centre crèche during the focus groups and this added a further element of informality, making the topic of 'childcare' even more relevant and salient.

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<sup>20</sup> To remind the reader, the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership was the CASE partner for my PhD.

<sup>21</sup> Confidentiality was stressed rather than anonymity, as clearly in face-to-face situations the respondent cannot remain anonymous. However, I could assure the respondents that I would handle data responsibility and I did this by ensuring that identifiable information was kept separately from the data and that all names were changed in reports and in this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Concerns about 'checking up' first became known in early discussions with members of the Newcastle EYDCP who had previously carried out research about use of childcare services. They described situations where parents had thought they were being judged on how well they were looking after their children and on whether they were leaving them with responsible people.



The 'ice was broken' quickly with a round of introductions over coffee and cakes (which I provided). I used a simple and short topic guide (Appendix 3) which was developed to steer the conversation. However, my contribution was minimal, simply introducing topics and allowing the discussion to flow. Therefore, the groups were to some extent 'self-managed' and my role as facilitator was to encourage participation from all group members and to probe for clarification where necessary. In fact, there were times when the participants had complete 'control' of the discussion. While I do not make any claims to a situation of 'participant observation', I did feel privileged to be in a position where I could listen to groups of mothers openly discuss the issues they considered important with regard to their choice and preference for childcare.

As already mentioned in part one of this chapter, as a local woman from a working class background, I was fairly 'well matched' to many of the participants in this study (Bourdieu 1999b) although at the time of the study I was not yet a mother myself. These focus groups, with women from disadvantaged areas, were no exception as I grew up in a socially deprived area of the North East and I understand what it means to live from 'hand to mouth' in a household with a father who was regularly unemployed and a mother who struggled to ensure the family survived economically, socially and emotionally. However, despite my background, it would have been naïve to think my role as a university researcher would not have an impact on the group and I remained constantly aware of this throughout the interviews.

To address issues of perceived privilege or position, I used a 'reflex reflexivity' approach during the discussions by questioning my questions and assessing how they might be perceived to minimise symbolic or linguistic violence (Bourdieu 1999b). Again, I believe this was easier for me because I had had similar experiences to many of these women, and, as Pierre Bourdieu argued, "...social proximity and familiarity provide two of the conditions of 'non-violent' communication." (Bourdieu 1999b, pp. 610)<sup>23</sup>. While it is extremely difficult to know if you are ever really 'accepted' in these situations, I developed a definite rapport with the women which meant we were all more at ease. However, while I was a group member, my overall aim was to remain impartial and I avoided expressing my views or opinions aware that this may distort or influence participants' responses.

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<sup>23</sup> See part one of this chapter for a discussion of 'non-violent communication'.



I ended the discussions by thanking the women and stressing how valuable their contribution was to the research, confirming that their comments would be used to help design a questionnaire about childcare<sup>24</sup>. Aware that some of the issues discussed might have raised concerns or additional questions, I left information leaflets which briefly described the research, provided my contact details in case they needed any further clarification and also provided useful numbers for support agencies for families under financial or emotional strain (Appendix 4). While no financial incentive to take part in the groups was provided to individuals, I donated £50 from my research fund to each group to thank them for meeting with me.

## **Stage 2 – The childcare survey**

The next stage of the study was the childcare survey which was a substantial and time-consuming task involving direct contact with nearly 700 households. The main aim of this stage was to statistically measure the use of childcare, in particular complementary childcare, in the two city wards selected. The face-to-face, interviewer-administered survey approach was used to increase the response rate (DeVaus 1995) and to improve access to 'hard to reach' groups such as those in disadvantaged areas or those with literacy problems who would be unlikely or not able to respond to a postal questionnaire. It is because of this choice of method, the sample for this stage of the study had to be randomly selected. When a decision is made to use a sample of a total population it is important that it is as representative as possible as the aim is to treat the sample as though it was the whole population in terms of drawing conclusions and inferences. As noted elsewhere, it is very rare that a perfectly representative sample can be achieved (Bryman and Cramer 1997). However, the use of probability sampling, whereby each unit is selected at random and therefore has an equal probability of being included in the sample, does considerably increase the representativeness (DeVaus 1995) (Arber 1993).

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<sup>24</sup> The themes which emerged were used throughout the questionnaire and these are summarised below in 'Developing the survey questionnaire'.

The size of the sample is also extremely important, as the larger the sample the greater the degree of flexibility to carry out more complex statistical analysis. In addition, a larger sample reduces the sampling error – that is the difference between the sample and the population (Bryman and Cramer 1997). However, sample size also has to be viewed in terms of the percentage of the response ('response rate') in relation to the overall sample (ie, all those who were initially contacted) and its representativeness of the relevant sub-groups within the total population being studied<sup>25</sup>. Ideally, for this study, the optimal sample size would have been around 900 completed questionnaires<sup>26</sup> but once again, this was not realistic in terms of time and resources. A compromise was reached focusing on key comparative variables such as ward, living and working arrangements of parents and the types of childcare used. This reduced the sample size to a more achievable 450-500 completed questionnaires<sup>27</sup>. Due to positive initial support from parents and childcare professionals, combined with the use of the interviewer-administered method, it was anticipated that the response rate would be approximately 65-70 per cent which meant 680-700 households would have to be contacted to achieve the desired completed sample.

### ***Selecting the sample***

The next major hurdle was to find a suitable and ethical way to access parents to obtain the random sample required. This proved to be extremely difficult and challenging, illustrating the problems researchers who want to produce reliable data often face when ethical considerations conflict with research requirements. While most research methods face problems of participant self-selection and bias, if the quantitative survey method is utilised without random sampling, selection bias is often increased because of the forms of access used<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, being able to select the sample, in the correct way, was essential to the success of this stage.

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<sup>25</sup> Therefore, a smaller number of completed questionnaires from a well-targeted, randomly selected sample with a good response rate provides more statistical power than high numbers achieved through an untargeted sample where response rates are low in relation to the number of questionnaires distributed.

<sup>26</sup> This was based on calculations using a matrix of variables including age of child, type of household, working arrangements of parents, ward of residence and type of childcare used to identify an ideal number of cases in each cell.

<sup>27</sup> By reducing the sample size it was acknowledged that it would be unlikely to obtain enough numbers in some categories to allow statistical analysis and this was the case for some sub-groups such lone fathers and working lone mothers.

<sup>28</sup> For example, for this study, I could have tried to access parents through family centres, or day nurseries. However, this would have restricted the sample to only those parents who used these facilities, once again potentially excluding those hard to reach, and socially excluded groups.



For the purposes of this stage of the study, to measure the use of the complementary childcare for children from birth to the end of primary school, I needed to gain access to two groups of parents; those with pre-school children up to age 3<sup>29</sup> and those with children in primary school from age 3 to 11 years. The main problem was that in order to select the households randomly, it was essential to have access to information that is data protected such as the names and addresses of parents. It became clear during January-February 2000 that the plans for access, as set out in the original CASE Studentship proposal<sup>30</sup>, were not adequate to allow a scientific, random sample to be selected. Therefore, alternative routes of access had to be explored all of which presented specific barriers.

Previous childcare studies (Meltzer 1994) had used Postal Address Files (PAF) which are available in electronic format from Royal Mail. However, as the files provide names and addresses for everyone living in a particular area, I would have had to issue large numbers of filter questionnaires to identify only those households with children<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, there was the option of the local Register of Electors, available from the local council, which provides the name and postal address of everyone registered to vote in the City. Unfortunately, this process would have also required a filter questionnaire to identify households with children and therefore, because of the time and resources available for this study, these methods of access were not suitable. I also contacted the local Registrar's Office to ask about access to information about registration of births. However, these records were inaccessible because of data protection laws.

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<sup>29</sup> Age 0-3 years was used as the pre-school category as early education places in primary school nurseries for all 3 year olds had been introduced at the time of the study.

<sup>30</sup> In the original ESRC CASE studentship application, it was proposed that parents with children aged 0-3 years would be accessed through Health Visitors and those with children aged 3-11 would be contacted via primary schools. Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) had previously used primary schools to gain access to parents for surveys about children's services. However, these previous surveys had used non-targeted, opportunistic sampling whereby self-completion questionnaires were delivered to the schools and given to children to take home to their parents. While this sampling method is very useful and convenient in some situations it was not suitable for this study where a random sample was required.

<sup>31</sup> In the Meltzer study they had to send out 36,800 filter questionnaires (and 2 reminder letters) in order to identify 4,184 households with children in the age category they were investigating.



Other childcare studies (LaValle et al. 1999) (Marsh and McKay 1993) have used Child Benefit records very successfully to access parents, as these records are extremely accurate and up to date because of the high uptake of this universal benefit. In particular, the research team responsible for the LaValle *et al* childcare study on behalf of the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), worked closely with the Department of Social Security (DSS) to obtain the required random sample of parents from Child Benefit records using an 'opt-out' letter of introduction sent by the DSS<sup>32</sup>. This was the preferred method of access for the study and a request was made to the DSS for similar support for this project. Unfortunately, this was rejected on grounds of workload and new policies giving priority to internal DSS research.

My next step was to revisit the routes of access initially proposed in the ESRC CASE study proposal of Health Visitors and primary schools acknowledging that issues of data protection would prevent them from providing me with contact details without an approach similar to the 'opt-out letter' used in the La Valle study<sup>33</sup>. I contacted Health Visitors first regarding access to parents with children aged 0-3 years<sup>34</sup> asking if they would be prepared to send out letters to a random sample of parents. Unfortunately, I could not obtain permission for this approach and while they offered to give out letters to families they were visiting so parents could contact me if they were interested, I felt there was not enough control with this process to allow a random selection. Fortunately, when I contacted the local primary schools regarding access to parents with children aged 3-11 years, the headteachers of all six primary schools in the two wards (two schools in Dene and four in Walker) agreed to send out an 'opt-out' introduction letter on my behalf. The letter (Appendix 5) was posted out to households of a random sample of parents identified from school records. This letter explained the purpose of the study and stressed that participation was voluntary and completely confidential. This letter was sent on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2000 and parents were given until the 9<sup>th</sup> of June to call to have their names removed from the study if they did not want any further contact.

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<sup>32</sup> The opt-out letter informed parents of the study and provided them with an option to call or write to have their names withdrawn from the list of people to contact. If the parents had not contacted the DSS by a specified date, then the names and addresses were given to the researchers so they could then contact the parents directly to ask them to take part in the study.

<sup>33</sup> While the 'opt-out' approach still had an element of self-selection, it was preferable to an 'opt-in' system or completely opportunistic or untargeted sampling where it may be that only the most motivated parents would have taken the time to respond.

<sup>34</sup> Health Visitors are well placed for access to parents with children aged 0-3 years as they carry out regular visits and hold comprehensive records for all parents with new born and pre-school children.



The main disadvantage of this method of access was that it was not possible to include households which **only** had pre-school children. As the households were identified through primary schools this meant all had at least one child in primary school living there. This was a significant setback to the research as households with pre-school children have the greatest demand for full-time childcare and having access to higher numbers of these households would have been extremely useful. However, this study has illustrated just how difficult it is to access parents, especially those with very young children, to enable a reputable sample of households to be selected. As discussed earlier, Child Benefit records are ideal but it is difficult to get permission to use these records. Therefore, rather than compromise the study by using non-random sampling, I decided to concentrate on the primary school age (3-11 years) group where it was possible to draw a scientific random sample of households. Consequently, the focus of the study changed although there were households that had pre-school children aged 0-3 as well as primary school childcare. In addition, as the total study design included follow-up, in-depth case studies, I decided I would explore the issues for parents with pre-school children at that stage.

To begin the selection process the target sample size ( $n=690$  adjusted to  $n=672$ )<sup>35</sup> was proportionally stratified first by size of ward and then by size of schools within the wards. In the first instance this was simply a matter of adding together the total number of households in the two wards with children of primary school age ( $N=1337$  adjusted to  $N=1319$ ). The proportion of households in each ward was then calculated as a percentage of the total. There were 541 or 41 per cent of the households in Dene and 778 or 59 per cent in Walker. The same method was then used to calculate the numbers to be selected from each school based on the size of school as a proportion of the overall sample for each ward.

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<sup>35</sup>The original number of letters sent was 690 and it was not until the survey was underway that it was recognised that 18 households had received two letters because they had children with different surnames living at the same address. Therefore, figures have been adjusted to reflect the 672 households that were actually contacted.

**Total number of households to be contacted** **672**

**DENE**

Total number of households selected in Dene ward (41%):	275
Number selected from school 1 (56% of 275)	154
Number selected from school 2 (44% of 275)	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>

**WALKER**

Total number of households selected in Walker ward (59%):	397
Number selected from school 1 (27% of 397)	107
Number selected from school 2 (39% of 397)	155
Number selected from school 3 (20% of 397)	79
Number selected from school 4 (14% of 397)	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>

The next stage of the sampling process involved simple random sampling, the most basic type of probability sampling where each unit (in this case each household) has an equal probability of inclusion in the sample. Every household was allocated a number and computer generated lists of random numbers were used to identify households to be selected. These lists were produced using SPSS to add a further dimension to the random nature of the sample and I worked very closely with school secretaries to make the process as simple and as straightforward as possible.

***Developing the survey questionnaire***

While these issues of access were being ‘worked through’, I was also developing the questionnaire that would be used to carry out the survey. There were a number of sources of information used during this process, and as a first step, I identified the main themes from the focus groups. It is acknowledged that the participants in the focus groups did not represent a comprehensive range of family circumstances<sup>36</sup>, however, the discussions were very useful in providing insight into the important issues for parents when making their childcare choices. In particular, the women had very strong views about where, and with whom they were prepared to leave their children.

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<sup>36</sup> All of the parents in the groups were mothers and in each case they were living in disadvantaged wards of the city.



In summary, the mothers in the focus groups talked about a preference for family members or friends, but especially 'family childcare', because of trust, safety and security, continuity and flexibility and emotional 'closeness'. However, problems with complementary childcare were also identified which involved situations of differences in standards and values between childcarers and parents. A major theme throughout the groups was 'guilt', with concerns about 'putting onto' or 'taking advantage' of complementary childcarers, especially older family members such as grandparents. When talking about formal childcare such as day nurseries or childminders, the mothers expressed concerns about abuse and neglect. They also discussed the cost of childcare and its influence on decisions about whether or not it was financially feasible to enter the labour market. Working mothers also described the 'guilt' of leaving the children to go out to work and the regret of having missed the very early years of their children's lives. These mothers also described situations of stress and anxiety when trying to juggle childcare and work.

The theoretical framework for this research is fundamentally feminist, therefore I remained sensitive to important feminist issues while developing the questionnaire, being especially careful to include questions about paid and unpaid work and the gendered nature of caring<sup>37</sup>. I also used findings from previous empirical childcare studies which have continued to report a disparity between the amount of time mothers spend caring for childcare, or arranging childcare, compared to fathers (Brannen and Moss 1991) (Wheelock and Jones 2002). There is also evidence to suggest that working mothers in particular experience anxiety over childcare (Hirsh et al. 1992) and that when trying to arrange hours of work to minimise the need for non-parental childcare, it is mothers rather than fathers who are most likely to make adjustments (Brannen et al. 1994)<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 2 for the theoretical background.

<sup>38</sup> This is evident by the large number of women in the UK in part-time employment.

The final questionnaire (Appendix 6) took account of the main issues raised in the focus groups and the findings of previous research as briefly outlined above. It was a long questionnaire, with 10 sections, as it had to accommodate a number of different household structures and multiple childcare arrangements. In summary, there were sections asking about the patterning of formal and complementary childcare and about attitudes towards types of childcare and paid work<sup>39</sup>. There was also a section asking for detailed information of up to 3 family members, friends or neighbours providing childcare on a regular weekly basis. Sections dealing with the work and work history for both mothers and fathers were also included although, recognising that it is a mother's employment that is most likely affected by childcare, the mother's section was more detailed asking questions about the impact of childcare on decisions about work and access to types of employment<sup>40</sup>. Because of the problems assessing parents with pre-school childcare, there was also a section about previous childcare when the children were first born. While there are problems with this 'retrospective' approach, as recall can be somewhat unreliable resulting in selective memory and possible reinterpretation of past events (DeVaus 1995), it was still considered worthwhile to include this section in order to obtain general information about childcare histories<sup>41</sup>. There was a section asking about emergency childcare, one about the sharing of household domestic tasks and another about the family's involvement in and use of community facilities<sup>42</sup>.

As assessing the appropriateness of childcare policy was also important to the study, there was a section devoted to Working Family Tax Credit and Childcare Tax Credit. This section used the vignette technique (Finch and Mason 1993) where hypothetical situations were presented of family members becoming registered as childminders so that Childcare Tax Credit could be claimed by the parents. These were followed by attitude questions asking respondents about paying family and friends for childcare. At the end of the questionnaire there were open questions providing parents with the opportunity to add their own comments about the type of childcare support they would like to see and about the role of relatives and friends in helping with childcare.

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<sup>39</sup> These sections used five-point Likert scales of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

<sup>40</sup> Respondents were asked to 'self-describe' occupations for themselves and their partners so these could be post-coded and grouped into broad occupational categories for the purposes of analysis to compare differences in occupations between mothers and fathers. The occupational categories used are discussed further in Chapter 5 and in Appendix 12.

<sup>41</sup> This data provided proved to be difficult to use and was therefore used as background to gain an understanding of the history of childcare rather than as a particular area of analysis.

<sup>42</sup> This section on the use of community services and facilities was included at the request of my CASE partner, the Newcastle EYDCP, as they wanted further information in this area.



## ***Carrying out the survey***

Once I was able to overcome the problems of access to parents and the questionnaire was piloted<sup>43</sup> and finalised, the full survey began. As mentioned earlier, the letters signed by headteachers and sent out to parents were posted in late May and this meant that I received the lists of parents and could start to contact them by the middle of June 2003<sup>44</sup>. With 672 households to contact and visit, it was necessary to hire additional interviewers to help with survey<sup>45</sup>. As I had developed the questionnaire, I trained the interviewers and produced packs which included written instructions and prompts for each section of the questionnaire and a research information leaflet to be left with all parents who took part in the study which included important contact details for relevant childcare agencies or parent help-lines (Appendix 7). The interviewers were asked to follow the structured format in order to minimise interviewer bias (DeVaus 1995).

Interviewers were also asked to obtain information, where possible about those who did not want to take part in the study so that an overview of non-respondents could be produced (Appendix 8)<sup>46</sup>. Finally, 'calling cards' were also supplied for use at households where there was no reply, asking parents to call to make an appointment. A decision was made at the beginning of the survey that in an effort to maximise participation there would be at least three and no more than four attempts at each household<sup>47</sup>. As the survey was carried out during the summer holidays, there were a number of parents away on holiday and this was an unfortunate consequence of the delayed start to the study. This inevitably had an impact on the finished response rate which was not as high as anticipated (see below).

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<sup>43</sup> The questionnaire was 'tested out' on six parents with different backgrounds, which included two mothers working full-time, a lone father, a mother studying full-time and two mothers working part-time. These were not included in the final sample, as the respondents were not living in the selected wards.

<sup>44</sup> This was almost three months later than the original schedule as I had been hoped to begin at the beginning of April 2000 and therefore have the survey completed before the school summer holidays. Unfortunately, because of the problems experienced with gaining access to parents in the first instance the survey was delayed and did not begin until late June 2000.

<sup>45</sup> This was possible with additional funding from my CASE partner.

<sup>46</sup> This information was recorded on contact sheets produced for each household from the database. The interviewers were asked to write an explanation on the sheet about what happened when they had tried to contact the parents. These sheets were returned at the end of the study so information about non-respondents could be recorded, as it is useful in social surveys to be able to identify barriers to encourage participation in future studies. It is also useful to have information so that those who refused to take part can be distinguished from 'unreachables', as these are then removed when calculating response rates.

<sup>47</sup> However, near the end of the survey there was an opportunity to call back to households if the interviewers were in the area. Therefore, in some cases seven or eight attempts were made.

All interviews were carried out during June to September 2000 and took place in the parents' own home, lasting from forty-five minutes to one and a half hours. Again, parents were assured that the survey was confidential and no information would be passed on to anyone else, or used for any other purpose other than that described in the information leaflet. As I carried out a large number of these interviews, I had direct experience of how the questionnaire was received by parents who said they found the tone and the type of questions asked to be genuinely supportive of parents and their childcare needs. With a limited number of funded hours available for additional interviewers most had used up their hours by the end of August 2000. A cut off date for the survey was set for the 30<sup>th</sup> September and I personally worked hard during September to increase the response rate by doing call-backs to parents who had agreed to take part after the summer holidays.

***Overview of the completed survey sample***

In total, 319 questionnaires were completed and this equates to a response rate of 52% using the following calculation. To begin, the 54 households where the family was no longer living at the address provided were classified as 'unreachable' and were removed from the study. The following standard formula was then used:

$$\text{Response rate} = \frac{\text{Number returned (319)}}{\text{N in sample (672) - unreachable (54)}} \times 100 = 52\%$$

(DeVaus 1995)

While 52% is a respectable response rate for this type of survey, it is lower than anticipated for reasons already discussed in this chapter to do with difficulties with access to parents and the late start for the survey. Unfortunately, this smaller sample size did create limitations to the data, as the numbers were too few in some of the sub-groups to perform any statistical analysis<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, there were not enough numbers in certain cells to carry out tests of association. In these situations, simple cross-tabs were used and the numbers presented.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, when certain groups were broken down into different characteristics, such as lone mothers working full-time, it ended up that there were only 12 participants in that group, 5 in Dene and 7 in Walker.



However, because of the random selection process, the completed sample was representative of the total population in both wards and compared to the City of Newcastle as a whole (see Appendix 9)<sup>49</sup>. The only areas where there were notable discrepancies related to female employment figures with far more females working part-time in this study compared to the overall ward and the City as a whole. However, this is not surprising as the figures for the total ward and for the City are for all females of working age whereas the women in this study all had children and, statistically, these women are far more likely to be working part-time (Taylor 2000). Chapter 5 provides the household and livelihood characteristics of all study households. However, in summary 49 per cent of the households were in Dene and 51 per cent in Walker. The majority (94%) of the respondents were female (mothers) despite the fact that the interview was offered to mothers or fathers<sup>50</sup>. Over two-thirds (71%) were two-parent households with 29 per cent who were lone parents. The majority (68%) of the lone parents in the sample lived in the disadvantaged ward of Walker which was expected because of the poverty experienced by many lone parents (Jenkins 2000).

The average age of the respondents was 36 years and the majority (98%) identified as White European. In terms of indicators of economic status, 76 per cent of respondents in Dene ward owned their own home compared to 20 per cent in Walker where the majority (80%) were living in rented, mainly council owned, accommodation. Levels of income varied considerably within and between the wards, but generally, income levels were lower in Walker with over a half (58%) who had a net weekly income of less than £200 compared to Dene where less than a quarter (21%) had this low income. Nearly a half (48%) of households in Walker were dependent on benefits as their sole source of income compared to 13 per cent in Dene. Furthermore, fewer respondents in Walker had access to a car and the group least likely to have a car were lone mothers in that ward (87% did not have access to a car). Linking this to proximity of close family members, 70 per cent of respondents in Walker lived within one mile of their next of kin, whereas almost a quarter (23%) of respondents in Dene lived over 11 miles away.

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<sup>49</sup> This compares the sample to figures obtained from the 1996 Inter-Censal Survey (Newcastle City Council 1997) regarding two-parent, lone parent status, type of accommodation, levels of employment and ethnicity.

<sup>50</sup> My experience of conducting the door-to-door interviews was that if a father answered and he was told the survey was about childcare many automatically referred me to his wife with comments such as "she looks after all that".

In terms of working arrangements, 48 per cent were 'full working households', where both parents (or a lone parent) were in paid work, 21 per cent were 'partially working households' where there were two parents but only one parent was working and 31 per cent were 'non-working households' with no working parent. Dene ward had higher levels of employment overall with 65 per cent of all 'full working households' and 53 per cent of all 'partially working households' located in that ward. Over half (51%) of mothers in the study were in paid work and nearly two-thirds of these (62%) living in Dene. The majority (64%) of mothers worked part-time with just over a third (36%) working full-time<sup>51</sup>. The majority (92%) of fathers living in Dene ward were in paid work compared to 58 per cent in Walker. The vast majority (94%) of working fathers worked full-time.

### **Stage 3 – Household case studies**

The final stage of the study was the in-depth case studies. Three households were selected from the survey and therefore detailed background information regarding work and living circumstances was readily available from the original questionnaire. As described earlier in this chapter, each household was 'purposively sampled'<sup>52</sup> because of the particular circumstances of the families in those households to provide insight into specific theoretical areas of study. For example, the reliance of lone parents on complementary childcare was clearly indicated in the survey. Therefore, it was felt important to explore this further so a lone mother household was selected where full-time complementary childcare had been used previously to allow the mother to work and was still being used for before and after school care and school holidays (case study household one). In case study household two, both parents were working shifts and had stated that previously they had had no option but to use complementary childcare because formal childcare was not available for the non-typical hours worked. In case study household three, both parents worked full-time and complementary childcare was used in combination with formal childcare and again this was chosen specifically to explore how combination childcare works in practice.

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<sup>51</sup> Full-time was defined as 30+ hours per week and part-time as 1-29 hours per week.

<sup>52</sup> 'Purposive or theoretically sampling' is used in qualitative research and is a process of sampling which focuses on the specific rather than the random (Glaser and Strauss 1967).



The reason for choosing 'working households' was because the survey demonstrated the high reliance on complementary childcare by working parents. However, the survey also confirmed the nature of complementary childcare as predominately 'family childcare' and in the majority of situations this was a grandparent. Therefore, in all case study households, it was either a grandmother or grandparents together who were providing the regular, weekly childcare support. The full profiles and childcare histories are described in chapter 7 with a summary of each household in table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 - Summary of case study households**

<b>CASE STUDY 1</b>	<b>CASE STUDY 2</b>	<b>CASE STUDY 3</b>
<b>Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lone parent/mother</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two parent household</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two parent household</li> </ul>
<b>Children:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One son aged 9 years at the time of the study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two children aged 8 and 5 years at the time of the study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two children aged 6 and 4 at the time of the study</li> </ul>
<b>Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother working full-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother working full-time including shift work</li> <li>• Father working full-time including shift work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother working full-time 9 to 5.</li> <li>• Father working full-time plus part-time work evening and weekends</li> </ul>
<b>Previous/pre-school childcare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both grandparents together full-time from 6 months old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childminder full-time from first born</li> <li>• Father stayed home for 2 years</li> <li>• grandmother full-time when youngest aged 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day nursery half time from 3 months old</li> <li>• Grandmother half-time from 3 months old</li> </ul>
<b>Childcare at the time of the case study interviews</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grandparents before and after school</li> <li>• Grandparents in the school holidays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grandmother before and after school</li> <li>• Occasional use of out-of school clubs as 'back-up'</li> <li>• Grandmother in the school holidays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grandmother before and after school</li> <li>• Occasional use of out-of school clubs as 'back-up'</li> <li>• Grandmother in the school holidays</li> </ul>
<b>In-depth interviews with:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother</li> <li>• Grandmother</li> <li>• Grandfather</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother</li> <li>• Father</li> <li>• Grandmother</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother</li> <li>• Father</li> <li>• Grandmother</li> </ul>

A vital condition before proceeding with a case study household was that personal contact was made with, and agreement was obtained from all those to be interviewed. This was important, as the inability to interview one member of the case study household would have jeopardised the validity of the case. Therefore, interview times were arranged for all members (mothers, fathers and all grandparents providing childcare) before the first interview took place and all interviews were carried out between September and November 2001.

Topic guides were used to steer the conversation and to ensure main areas were included such as previous and current childcare decision-making and the affect of childcare on family relationships (Appendix 10 and Appendix 11)<sup>53</sup>. However, the guides were also flexible enough to allow for in-depth probing and 'detours' into unexpected areas of interest. The interviews all took place in the interviewee's own home and lasted from one to one and a half hours. Like all other stages of the study, confidentiality was assured with a promise that no identifiable information would be used when reporting the findings from this study. However, in practice, I found this more difficult for the case studies as the particularity of the 'case' conflicted with the commitment to using 'non-identifiable' information. I have addressed this issue by changing all names in the case study profiles and by changing some of the personal details making it more difficult to identify participants<sup>54</sup>.

My personal experience of these interviews was that there were situations where the boundaries between the manufactured interview and everyday 'normal' interactions became decidedly blurred. As described earlier in this chapter, in some cases my background was very similar to the people I was interviewing and this was helpful in terms of 'non-violent communication' and 'controlled imitation' where I was able to adopt the interviewee's language and I had sympathy with their views and feelings (Bourdieu 1999b).

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<sup>53</sup> While the general topic guide was developed for parents and grandparents, details were added before each interview using details from the survey questionnaire. This helped to personalise the interviews.

<sup>54</sup> This was especially challenging as the households were selected because they offered insight into how parents handled childcare in particular situations, requiring a full description of these situations to allow a full analysis. Therefore, I have changed details which I believe do not compromise the context, while maintaining confidentiality.



My aim throughout the interviews was to remain impartial although this was sometimes difficult to maintain when interviewees expressed strong feelings about certain issues with which I disagreed. As the purpose of the interviews was not 'consciousness raising' but that of enquiry, I refrained from challenging these views. However, this impartiality should not suggest that there was not reciprocity in the interviews<sup>55</sup> and I did share some of my personal history with the interviewees. This was particularly the case when interviewing Barbara, who had had a very similar childhood to my own and we shared stories and experiences, which was, I believe, an important part of the interview process<sup>56</sup>. I think it is possible to have reciprocity without compromising impartiality about the topic of enquiry. For example, I was extremely careful not to lead the participants by voicing my own views about childcare or the Government's role in supporting parents. From the construction through to the delivery of the questions, I was aware of the potential to project my pre-conceptions about this area of study and the need to be truly reflexive about my role in the entire research process. The final stage to maximise validity is in the analysis, through the use of rigorous and systematic methods of interpretation and representation, as discussed in the following section.

## **Interpretation and representation**

How do we know that what we represent from our research findings is an accurate interpretation of the phenomena being studied? As discussed in part one of this chapter, my epistemological views reject the notion of absolute certainty about the knowledge we produce. But how can we be even reasonably certain (Hammersley 1992b) about our findings? Jennifer Mason suggests that validity should be judged through both methods and interpretation (Mason 1996) and I have tried to show throughout this chapter the appropriateness of choice and application of methods. However, because of the subjective nature of interpretation, its validity is more difficult to demonstrate. Therefore, the researcher must be systematic and rigorous in organising and sorting the data so that it can be used not just to reflect their personal interests, but also to question their assumptions and beliefs (DeVaus 1995).

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<sup>55</sup> This again fits with my overall aim of reflexive research acknowledging my position and influence in the interview process. As Ann Oakley stated in her classic critique of the hierarchical nature of the research relationship, there should be "no intimacy without reciprocity" (Oakley 1981, pp. 49).

<sup>56</sup> I was also in the first stage of my pregnancy when the case study household interviews took place and therefore I was also able to discuss my early symptoms with the mothers which also provided a useful icebreaker.



There were two types of data produced from this study and these were sorted and analysed in different ways. I entered all 960 variables from the quantitative survey onto SPSS<sup>57</sup>. Each survey questionnaire was allocated a research number for identification purposes, but for reasons of confidentiality, respondent identifiable information was always kept in a separate file to which I was the only person who had access. Using SPSS, I carried out univariate and bivariate analysis of this data, making use of measurements of central tendency and dispersions. I also used tests of significance and measures of association between variables to estimate how far a difference or relationship is due to the use of the sample population. In social sciences, it is generally accepted that if a difference only has a 5 in 100 or less ( $p=0.05$ ) chance of being due to sampling, then it is considered significant. The smaller the p-value the greater the strength of evidence for a statistical association and therefore any result presented which is less than  $p=0.05$  is considered statistically significant of an association between a dependent and explanatory variable.

The qualitative data from the focus groups and the case studies was in the form of taped interviews. These were transcribed and imported into NUD\*IST<sup>58</sup> and again this data was handled responsibly by changing all names of participants and all identifiable information was kept separately. NUD\*IST was used to sort and code the data thematically. Initial coding was then collapsed and incorporated into overarching themes using a process of constant comparative analysis where new data is compared to previous data, looking for negative cases which challenge emerging themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967)<sup>59</sup>. In some cases when presenting this data throughout the thesis, substantial sections of the transcripts are included. These are to provide context and this is particularly important for the focus group data where comments have to be viewed in relation to the perspectives of others.

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<sup>57</sup> SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) is a commonly used computer software package for the analysis of quantitative data.

<sup>58</sup> NUD\*IST is a commonly used computer software package for the analysis of qualitative data.

<sup>59</sup> Constant comparative analysis is a process in Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis. In its entirety grounded theory involves a rigorous and systematic set of procedures which integrates the process of data production, coding and analysis to generate theory from data produced. Coding is crucial as this links the subcategories to produce the cumulative body of research. In particular, for theory to be truly grounded in the data the researcher needs to compare new cases through constant comparative analysis until saturation point is reached and the researcher is 'sure' they are hearing nothing new. While time constraints and lack of resources made it impracticable to follow a purist approach to grounded theory, using both the open and axial coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin 1994) the interview transcripts were read and re-read, then analysed as an iterative process into emerging categories.



When using the two types of data together, I did not assume an over-simplified notion of 'triangulation' as it has been well documented that certain assumptions that triangulation ensures the validity of the data, are over-stated (Bryman 1988) (Fielding and Fielding 1986) (Bryman 1992). As Bryman points out, these views of greater validity were originally presented in relation to the use of more than one method of quantitative research, for example, a structured interviewer administered questionnaire alongside a self-completed questionnaire. In this case, the methods have similar aims and outcomes (the production of statistical measurements) and they are, therefore, more easily comparable. However, there remains a dispute as to whether quantitative and qualitative data can be truly compared as these methods are being used to explore different aspects of the phenomena being studied. Therefore, when analysing and interpreting the data, rather than focus on the 'integration' of different data types, I was more inclined to view them as complementary instead of striving for some kind of consistency (Brannen 1992). For example, where the quantitative data provided evidence of relationships, using the qualitative data I was able to explore the reasons for the relationships. It is because of this approach that the data are presented together in many cases throughout the thesis to support and reinforce particular findings.

While I have done my best to ensure rigour and to provide sufficient examples of data both in terms of 'interesting' associations and themes, as well as negative cases, it would be naïve to think the interpretation does not also reflect my personal interests. As stated throughout this chapter, we cannot escape or ignore our pre-conceptions and personal views. The best we can do as responsible researchers is to remain reflexive and transparent about our involvement in the research and ensure that the data is used to 'test' our beliefs and those of others (DeVaus 1995). The chapters that follow present the data produced from this study, analysed to the best of my ability by using appropriate theoretical and empirical work to explore and explain these findings and also taking into account the main methodological issues raised in this chapter.

## Chapter 5: Who looks after children besides their parents?

One of the aims of this study was to measure statistically the childcare behaviour of parents living in two socio-economically contrasting areas of Newcastle upon Tyne. Using the City of Newcastle's already established geographical divisions of city wards, for which easily accessible demographic information was available (Newcastle City Council 1997), Dene ward was selected to represent a more affluent ward with mainly two-parent, working households, and Walker ward as an area of social disadvantage and hardship with many non-working and lone parent households. Surveying a randomly selected and representative sample of households in these two wards has made it possible to map out the study of complementary childcare by providing context through comparison with the use of other forms of childcare and by producing data on the childcare patterns of various household types.

To remind the reader, baseline data was available from previous large-scale representative childcare studies on parents' use of childcare (Marsh and McKay 1993) (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999). These were useful in providing comparisons between different types of childcare, and consistently confirmed that complementary childcare, provided mainly by family members, is the most commonly used type of childcare in the UK, especially by working parents. Unfortunately, as these previous studies focused analysis on the demand for, and availability of, formal childcare there remained gaps in knowledge about the reasons parents were relying so heavily on complementary childcare and about the circumstances of the family, friends and neighbours providing this childcare. Acknowledging this information shortfall, the study presented here was designed to add value and knowledge by specifically focusing on complementary childcare and producing crucial data about the lives of complementary childcarers<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It has now been recognised that more information is needed about the vast number of people providing care for family or friends (5.2 million in England and Wales). As a result, for the first time, questions about age, number of hours, employment and health status of unpaid carers were included in the 2001 population census (National Statistics website: [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) 2001). This has provided basic census information. However, this study provides more in-depth information about the circumstances of people who support their family and friends by supplying mainly unpaid childcare.



In addition to providing further insight into complementary childcare, this study also goes beyond the narrow focus of previous studies that have concentrated on childcare for work purposes only. While childcare used by 'working' households is a main area of analysis because of its importance to household livelihoods, valuable data were also produced from the survey about childcare used by households with at least one non-working parent. The inclusion of this data reinforces a theoretical position based on household provisioning and resourcing placed in a wider context to include not only economic factors but also issues of social well-being and the need for support in times of ill health, stress and emotional hardship. Furthermore, in recognition of the overall feminist framework, this study did not focus entirely on the working or non-working status of mothers only, as has been the case in previous studies, but instead detailed information was obtained for both parents in order to look at the use of, and requirement for, childcare if neither parent was available.

The main findings from the interviewer-administered childcare survey are presented in this chapter using statistical data produced from closed questions and parents' comments provided in response to open questions<sup>2</sup>. The analysis compares and contrasts the childcare used by families living in the two selected wards while also considering two-parent or lone parent household status. This begins by analysing 'full working households' (with both parents or a lone parent working), where, in the majority of cases, additional non-parental childcare was a vital resource to allow parents to sustain their livelihoods by going out to work. Then childcare used by 'partially working households' (with only one parent working) and 'non-working households' (no parent working) is presented, considering how childcare is used to promote social well-being and, in many cases, to maintain important inter-generational relationships. The final section looks more closely at the family members, friends and neighbours who were providing complementary childcare giving detailed information about their living and working arrangements. However, to understand better the patterns of childcare used by the study households, it is necessary to describe their social and economic positions. Therefore, the next sections provide data on household and livelihood characteristics to demonstrate the stark contrast between the two wards and to provide insight into the different ways in which families in the study were sustaining their livelihoods before moving on to consider the role of childcare in allowing them to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> To avoid repetition, wherever a comment is presented in quotes and italics in this chapter, these are terms and phrases used by parents during the survey interviews in response to open questions.

## Household characteristics

The aim of this section is to build up a picture of the study households, almost half of which were located in Dene ward (49%/156) and just over half in Walker ward (51%/163). The social and economic characteristics of households in each ward were very different and this had implications for the way in which they were able to manage their day-to-day childcare and sustain their livelihoods. Two-parent or lone parent status was particularly important in this context as two-parent households have greater capacity for the distribution of household responsibilities and more potential for a higher income than lone parent households. As such, lone parenthood is a useful indicator of socio-economic status, as research has shown that lone parents are more likely to be living in poverty, less likely to be employed and often marginalised into areas of social disadvantage and deprivation (Buck 2000) (Taylor 2000).

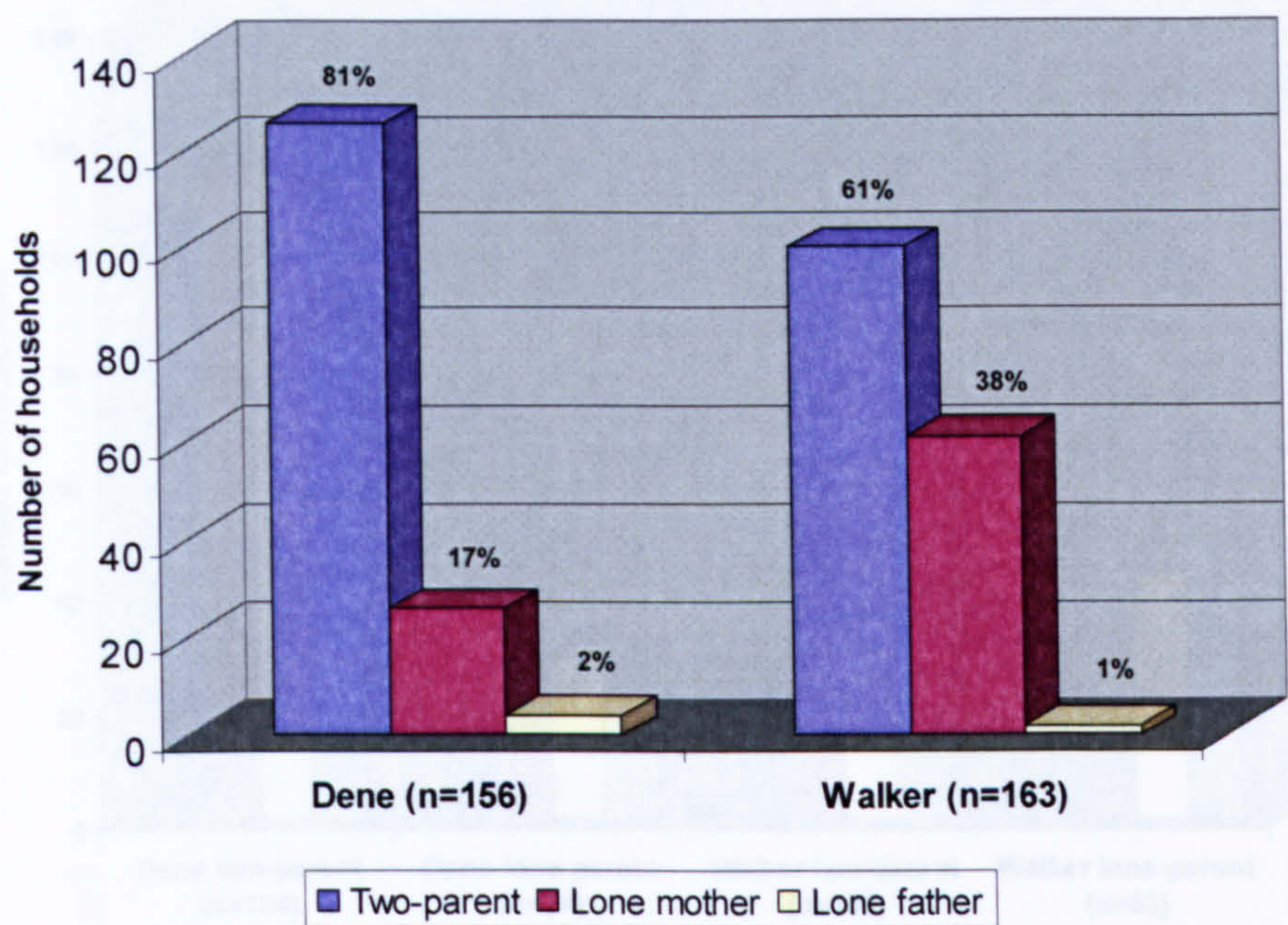
In this study, the highest proportion (71%) of all households had two parents, therefore lone parents accounted for just under a third (29%) of households and this included a very small proportion (only 6 households) of lone fathers. However, it is when we start looking at the ward distribution of two-parent or lone parent households (figure 5.1) that the social contrasts between Dene and Walker begin to emerge. Two-parent households dominated the Dene sample (81%), whereas in Walker, lone parents accounted for a substantial proportion (38%) of all households. Exploring this further, there was a very strong statistical association between ward and lone parenthood ( $X^2 = 14.55 (1), p=0.000$ )<sup>3</sup>, confirming that it was more likely for lone parents to be living Walker (over two-thirds of all lone parents lived in this ward).

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<sup>3</sup> This notation, repeated throughout this chapter, shows the value of Pearson's chi-square ( $X^2$ ), followed by the degree of freedom (measure of variability) presented in parenthesis. The strength of the statistical association is shown as a *p*-value, noting that any value at  $<0.05$  is evidence of a significant association between the variables (a *p*-value of  $<0.01$  is evidence of a very strong significant association) (Corston and Colman 2000).



Figure 5.1 – Two-parent and lone parent status by ward



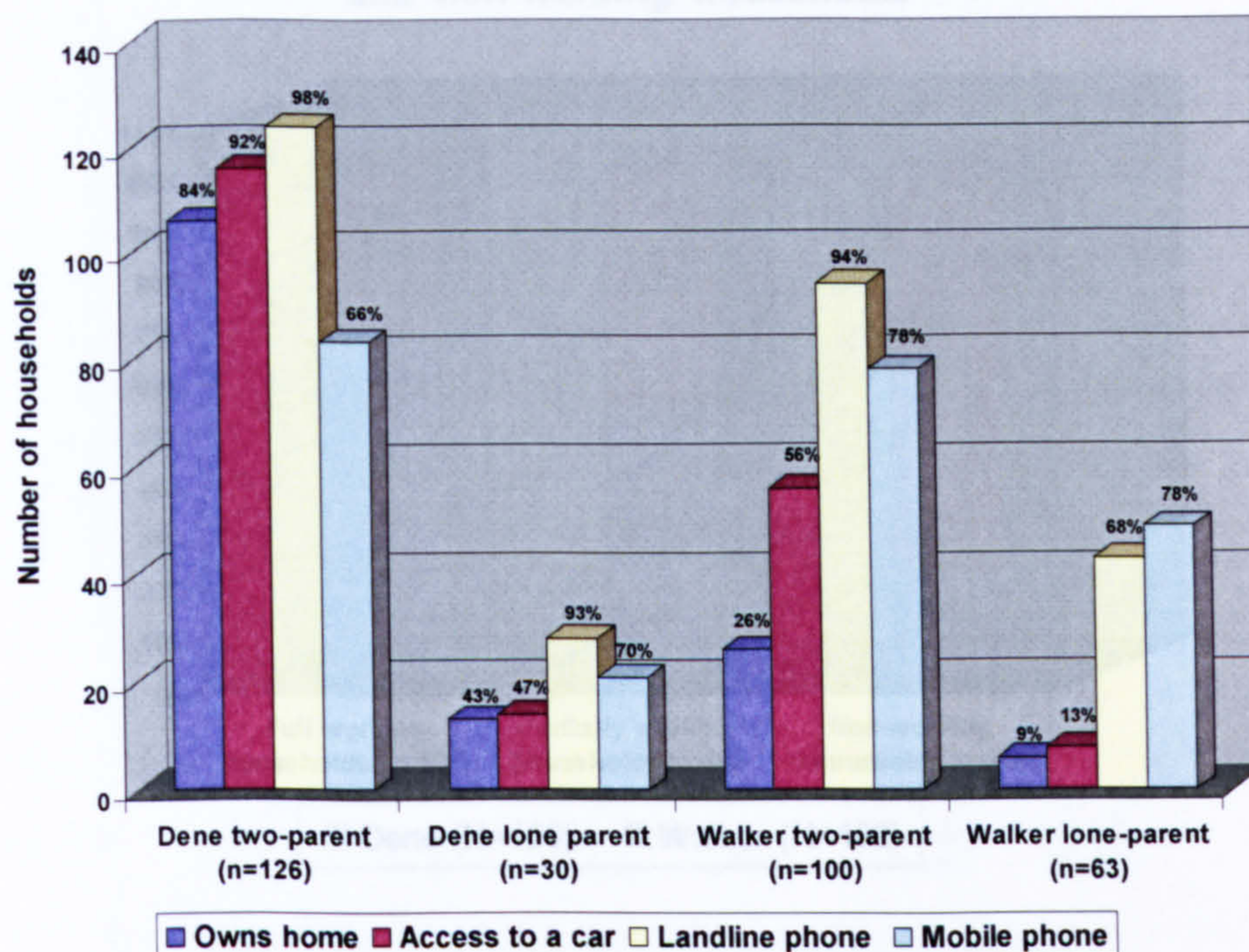
Looking at access to material assets (figure 5.2) also provides important insight into the socio-economic position of households in the two wards. Beginning with housing tenure, there were stark differences with most two-parent (84%) and nearly half (43%) of lone parents in Dene as owner-occupiers compared to just over a quarter (26%) of two-parent and only 9 per cent of lone parents living in walker who owned their home. Instead, the vast majority of Walker families were relying on social rented housing provided by the local council which is the most common type of housing in this disadvantaged area of Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>4</sup>. In addition, when considering other possible indicators of socio-economic status such as access to a car - Carstairs index of area deprivation (Carstairs and Morris 1989) – then we see patterns of affluence or disadvantage continue as households in Dene were twice as likely as those in Walker to have access to a car. Looking at this in terms of specific groups, two-parent households in Dene had the highest proportion of car owners (92%), and lone parents in Walker had the lowest (only 13% owned a car)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The link between housing tenure and socio-economic status has been demonstrated elsewhere, in particular in relation to area deprivation, confirming that tenants of social rented housing are much more likely to be living in the worst 20 per cent of areas in the UK (Buck 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The consequences of lack of transport in relation to childcare will be in discussed in later chapters as a policy issue with a specific example from one lone parent case study household.



Figure 5.2 - Comparison of material assets

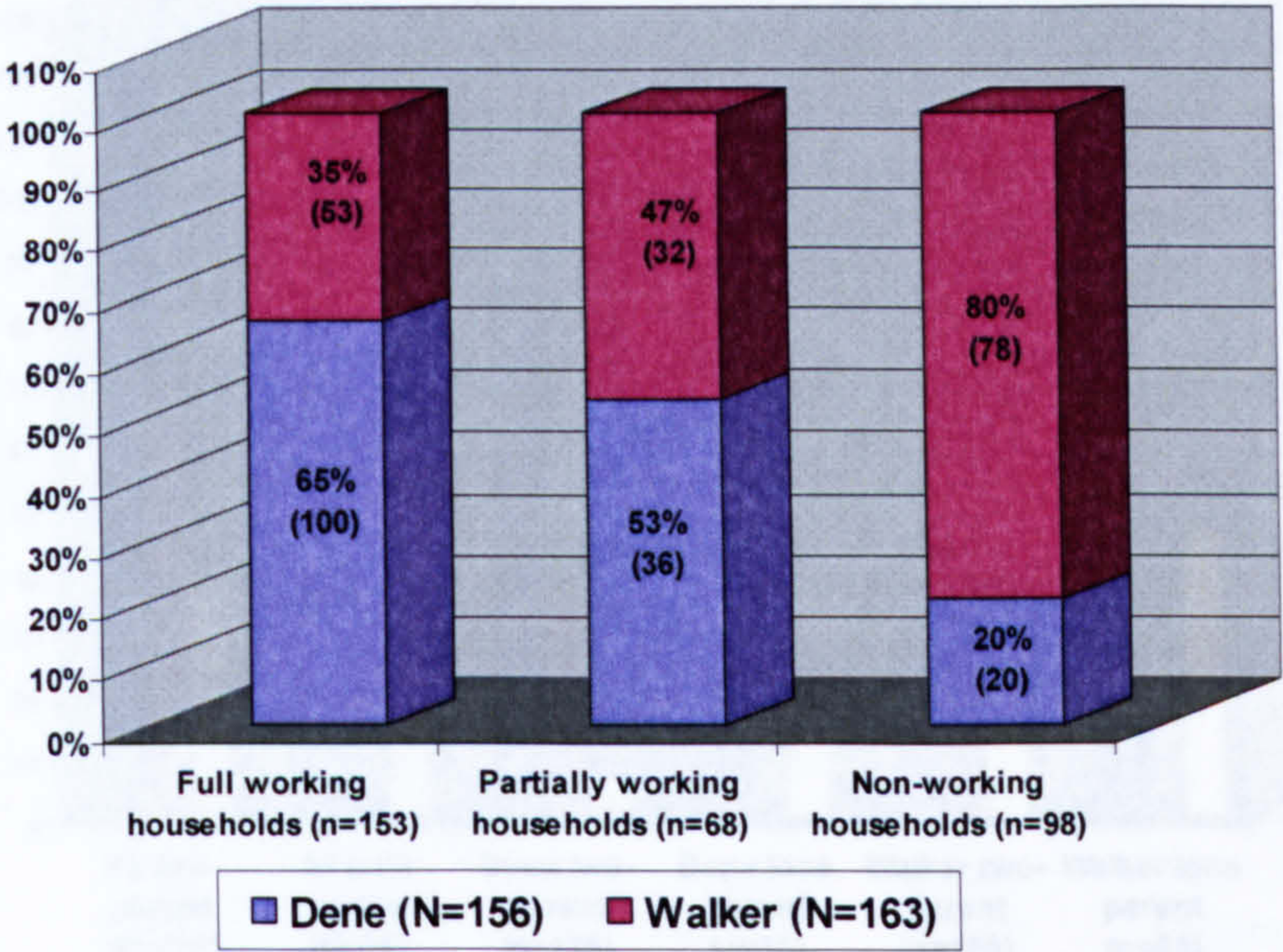


Within the study households, some families sustained their economic livelihoods through paid work while others were not working and relied on state benefits<sup>6</sup>. There were three types of households: **‘full working households’** with both parents (or a lone parent) in paid work; **‘partially working households’** which were two-parent households where only one parent (either father or mother) was in paid work; and **‘non-working households’** where there was no parent in paid work. As employment status is yet a further indicator of socio-economic status and area deprivation, (Carstairs and Morris 1989) it is unsurprising that there were significant differences between the wards. It was statistically more likely for households in Dene to have at least one parent in paid work than households in Walker with a very strong association between ward and employment status ( $X^2 = 45.96 (1), p=0.000$ ). The striking differences between employment status in the wards are illustrated more clearly in figure 5.3 showing the distribution of the three household types across Dene and Walker as a percentage of the total in each group. This confirms that over two-thirds (65%) of all ‘full-working households’ were located in Dene ward with the vast majority (80%) of all ‘non-working households’ in Walker.

<sup>6</sup> See section ‘Livelihood characteristics’ for data on level of income for those households in paid work and those dependent on state benefits.



**Figure 5.3 – Between ward distribution of ‘full working’, ‘partially working’ and ‘non-working’ households**

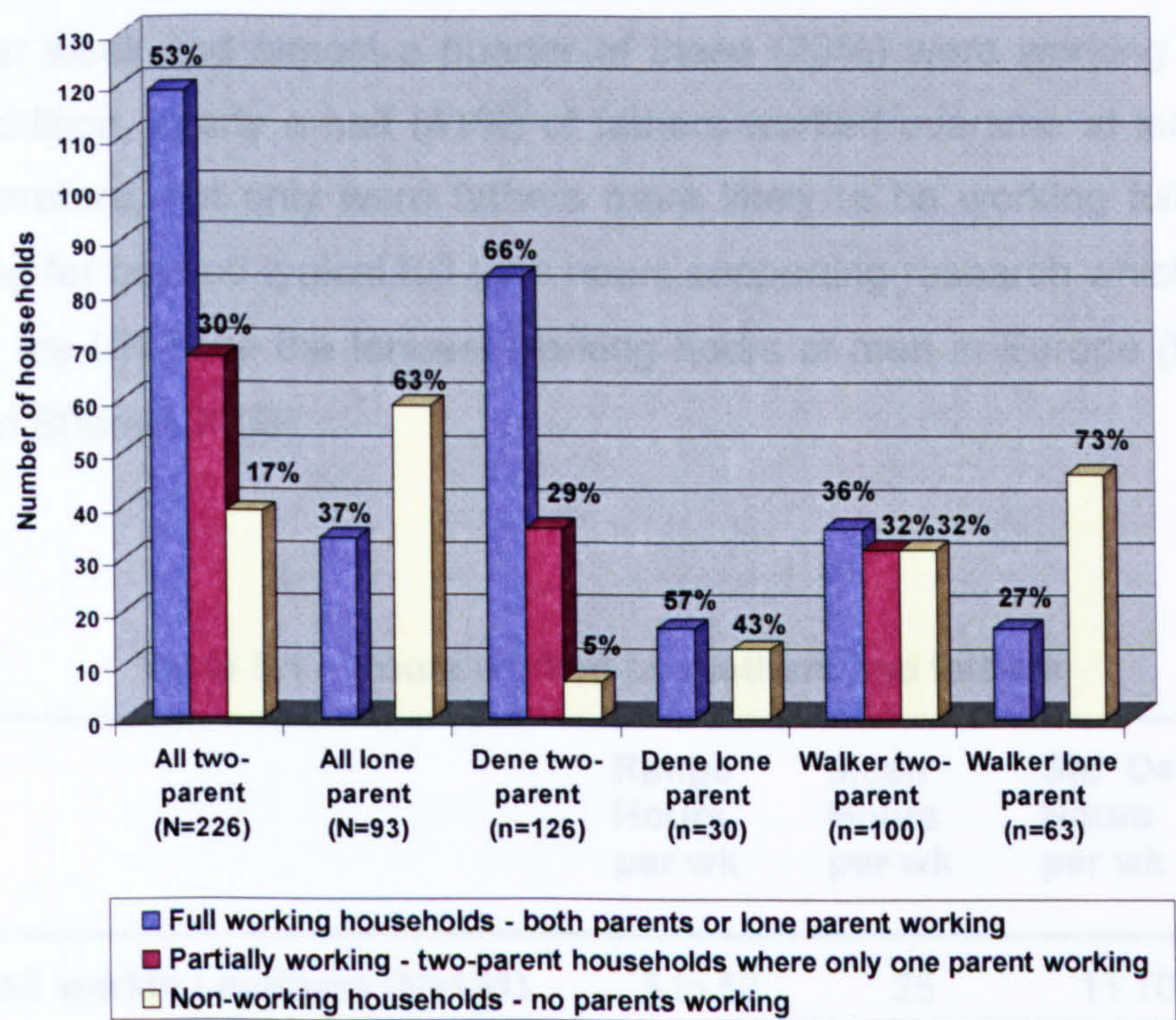


However, it is also interesting to look at the within group distributions and figure 5.4 provides the proportions of two-parent and lone parent households which were either ‘full working’, ‘partially working’ or ‘non-working’ for the entire sample population alongside distributions within Dene and Walker. Overall two-parent households were more likely to be in paid work than lone parents confirmed by strong statistical evidence that whether or not a household had a working parent was significantly associated with two-parent or lone parent status ( $\chi^2 = 66.03 (1), p=0.000$ ). However, the analysis also illustrates the combined influence of ward of residence and two-parent or lone parent status on levels of employment making it possible to confirm more accurately the defining characteristics of the study samples in each ward. Dene had mainly two-parent households and high levels of employment. Of all households in the study, those most likely to have at least one parent in paid work were two-parent households in Dene ward (66 per cent both parents working and 29 per cent with one parent working). In contrast, Walker had far higher levels of unemployment with a third (32%) of all two-parent households in Walker which were ‘non-working’. Walker also had a greater proportion of lone parent households and an especially high proportion of these were ‘non-working’ (73%). Of all the households in the study, those most likely to be ‘non-working’ were lone parent households in Walker<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Evidence presented elsewhere, based on British Household Panel Survey data, has confirmed that nationally it is less likely for lone parent households to be in paid work (Taylor 2000).



Figure 5.4 – Distribution of ‘full working’, ‘partially working’ and ‘non-working’ households by two-parent or lone parent status



In terms of childcare management, it was not just important whether parents were in paid work or not as one of the key factors in beginning to understand how they managed their childcare was to look at the number of hours per week parents were engaged in paid work. In each study household, information was obtained about hours worked by both mothers and fathers (if applicable). This produced data on 161 working mothers and 179 working fathers. The range, average number (mean) and standard deviation<sup>8</sup> of hours for all working parents are presented in table 5.1 and the range of hours tells us a great deal about the nature of mothers and fathers employment. The maximum hours for working mothers were 52 hours per week, but this was very unusual (only one case). Nevertheless, using data of the full distribution of the range of hours worked<sup>9</sup> it was possible to calculate that 8 per cent of mothers were working 40 hours per week and a cumulative 12 per cent working above 40 hours. However, more in keeping with the predominance of part-time work among mothers, the mean or average number was 25 hours per week.

<sup>8</sup> Standard deviation measures the variability within the data and provides the average difference between each score and the mean.

<sup>9</sup> The full distribution of the range of hours worked is not shown here.



On the other hand, fathers were working very long hours with a mean or average number of 43 hours per week, and more striking, over two-thirds (68%) worked over 40 hours per week and almost a quarter of these (23%) were working 50 hours or more. In addition, nearly a half (41%) of fathers worked overtime at least once per month. Therefore, not only were fathers more likely to be working full-time, some were working far beyond typical full-time hours supporting research which has shown that men in the UK have the longest working hours of men in Europe (Marsh 1991) (O'Brien and Shemilt 2003).

**Table 5.1 – Hours worked by mothers and fathers**

	<b>Range Hours per wk</b>	<b>Mean Hours per wk</b>	<b>Std Dev. Hours per wk</b>
<b>All working mothers (N=161)</b>	5 to 52	25	11.70
<b>All working fathers (N=179)</b>	8 to 105 <sup>10</sup>	43	11.16

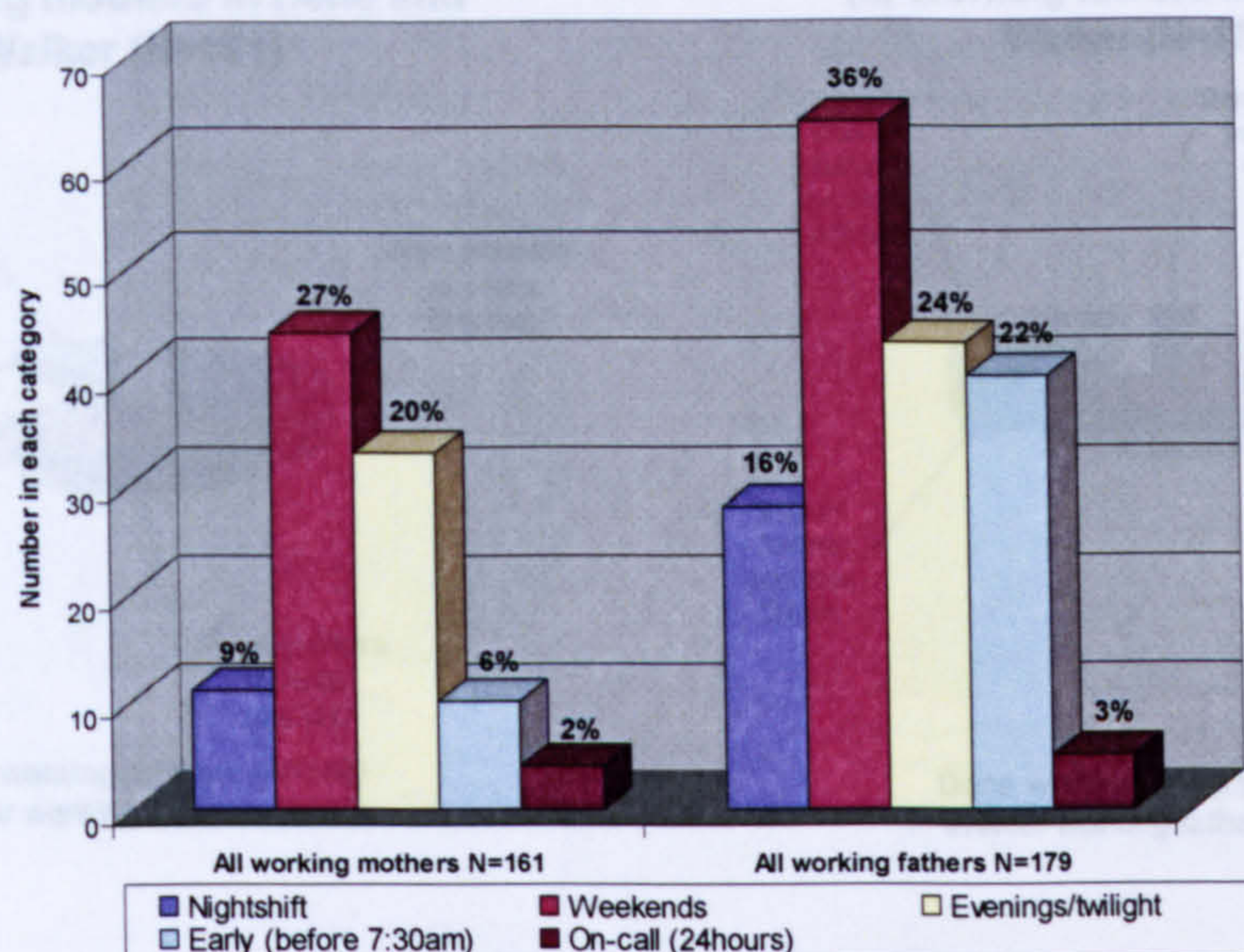
There were parents who also had unusual work patterns and while some households were able to use shift work to their advantage in arranging childcare, others found it extremely difficult to find childcare to cover non-typical working hours<sup>11</sup>. For over a third of all working mothers and a half of all working fathers shift work formed part of their weekly work pattern. This reflects changes in the type of work available as non-typical working hours have become more common for women and men because of the ever expanding ‘services’ sector (McLaughlin 1994). There were differences in the type of shifts worked with fathers starting work very early in the morning (22%) and working more night shifts (16%), although weekend work was common for both fathers and mothers (figure 5.5).

<sup>10</sup> There was only case where the father had worked 105 hours in the previous week and this was a Police Officer who had been called on to work extra shifts. It provides an extreme example of work patterns in some occupations.

<sup>11</sup> The positive and negative implications of shift work for childcare arrangements will be discussed later in this chapter with a particular example of the difficulties when both parents work shifts which is explored in one of the case study households in Chapter 7.



**Figure 5.5 – Types of shifts worked by mothers and fathers**



NB: Mothers and fathers could be working more than one type of shift

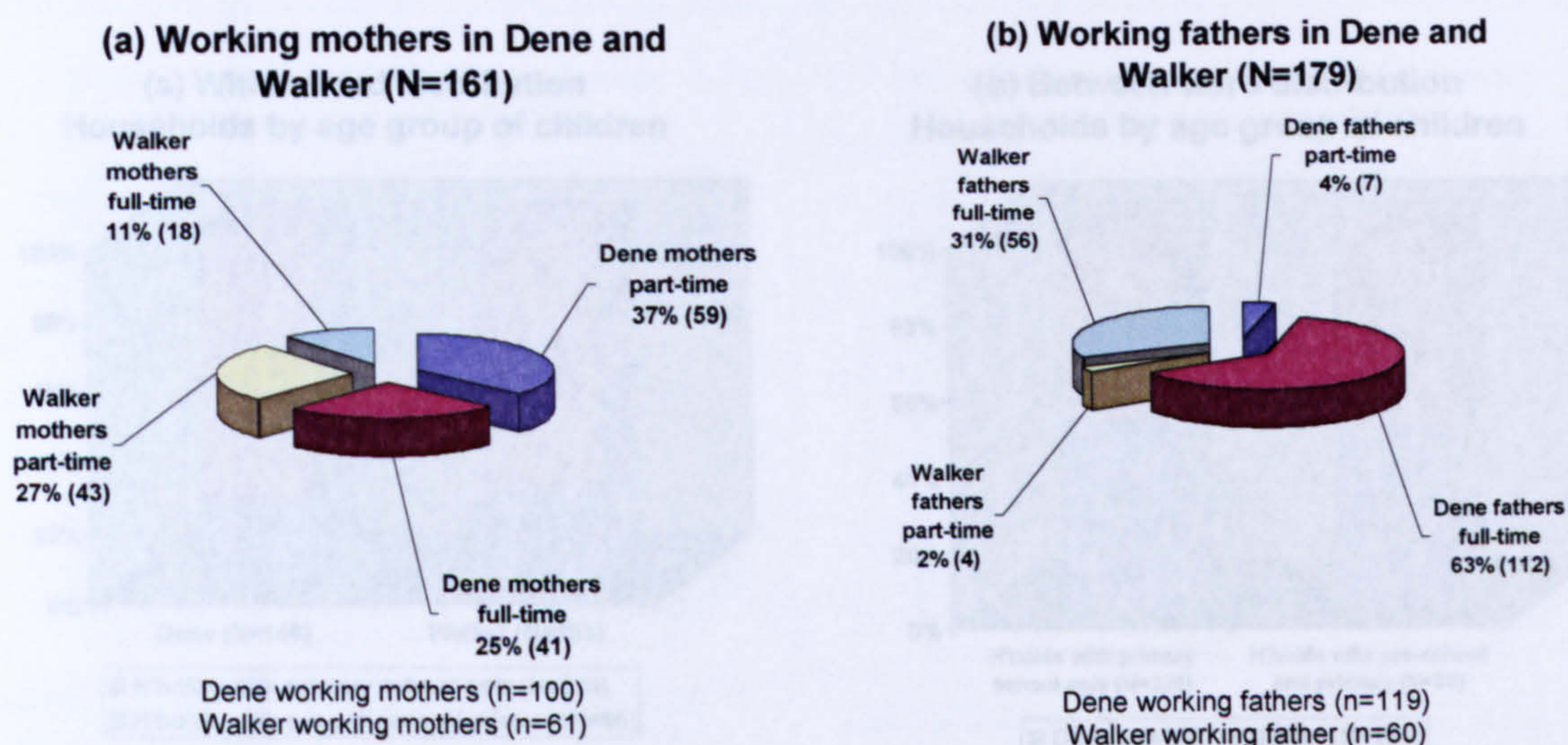
However, what was ultimately important in the context of this study was whether a parent was at home to care for the children and the subsequent need for additional, non-parental childcare if no parent was available. This analysis is most useful if combined with age groups of children as, for example, it would potentially be easier for parents to avoid the need for additional childcare if their children were in school and at least one parent was able to work part-time hours only. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, working hours of parents were categorised as full or part-time<sup>12</sup> and to begin, figure 5.6 provides an overview confirming the predominance of part-time work among mothers (64%)<sup>13</sup> compared to fathers, almost all of whom were working full-time (94%).

<sup>12</sup> To remind the reader, part-time hours were defined as up to 29 hours per week and full-time hours as 30+ hours per week.

<sup>13</sup> This finding corroborates national statistics of labour trends which have repeatedly reported that women with children are more likely to be working part-time (Thair and Risdon 1999) (Department for Education and Employment 2000).



**Figure 5.6 – Full or part-time work for mothers and fathers in Dene and Walker**



To combine the analysis of working arrangements of parents with age groups of children, the children living in the study households were also categorised into two groups. As the study was concerned with childcare for children from birth to the end of primary school, information was obtained for only those children aged 11 years or younger<sup>14</sup>. This produced data for 544 children, almost half (48%) living in Dene and just over half (52%) in Walker. Sample households were selected from primary schools in both wards and therefore all households had at least one child of primary school age while in other households there were also younger pre-school children. Therefore, the two groups were 0-3 years (pre-school) and 3-11 years (primary school - including children attending primary school nurseries)<sup>15</sup>.

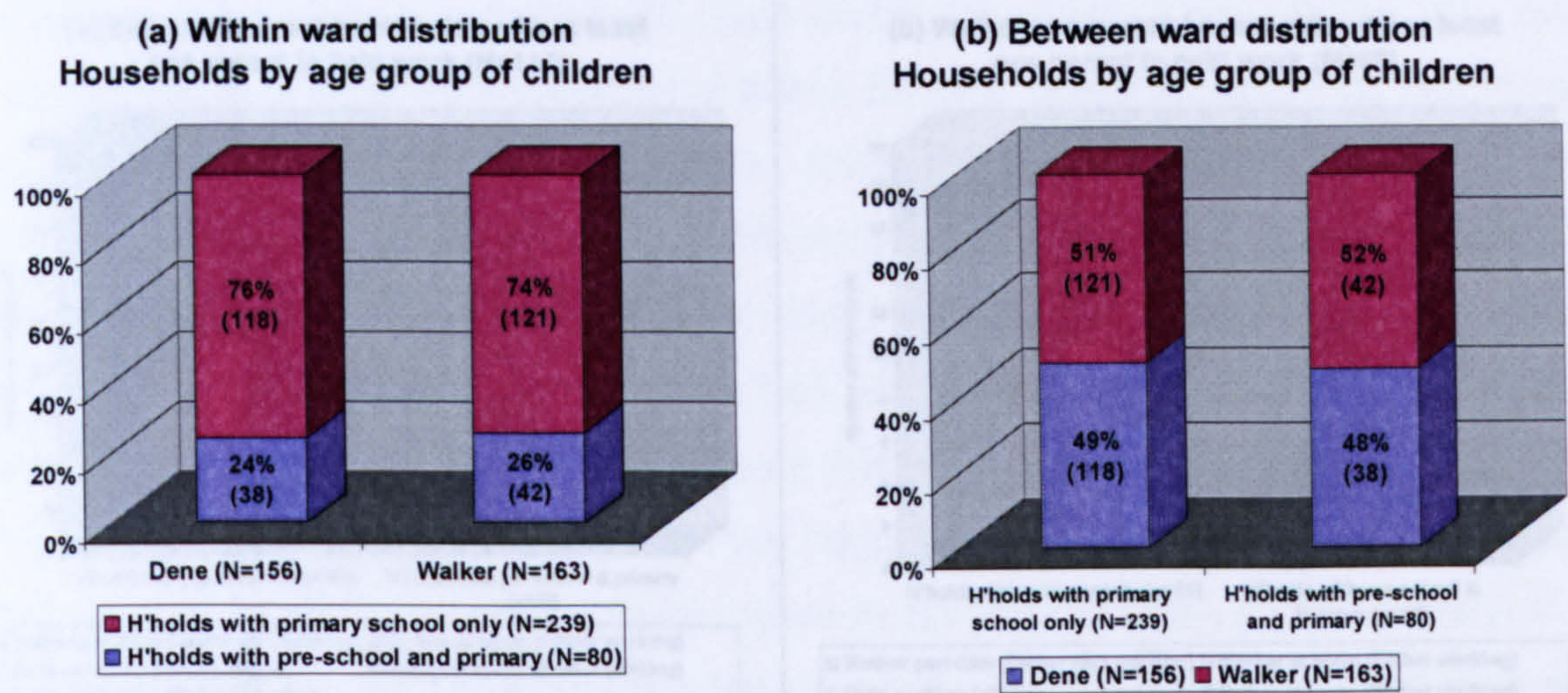
Three-quarters (75%) of all households had only primary school and the remaining households (25%) had pre-school as well as primary school children. These percentages for the entire sample were mirrored within the wards with 76 per cent of Dene households and 74 per cent of Walker households that had only primary school children (figure 5.7a). In terms of between ward proportions, households with primary school children only and those with both pre-school and primary were extremely evenly distributed with approximately half in each group in Dene and Walker (figure 5.7b).

<sup>14</sup> The precise cut-off age for inclusion was 11 years and 11 months.

<sup>15</sup> The ages were obtained in years and months and calculated as follows: 0-3 years included children from birth up to 2 years and 11 months (35 months); 3-11 years were children aged 3 years (36 months) up to 11 years and 11 months (143 months).



Figure 5.7 – Within and between ward distribution of households by age group of children

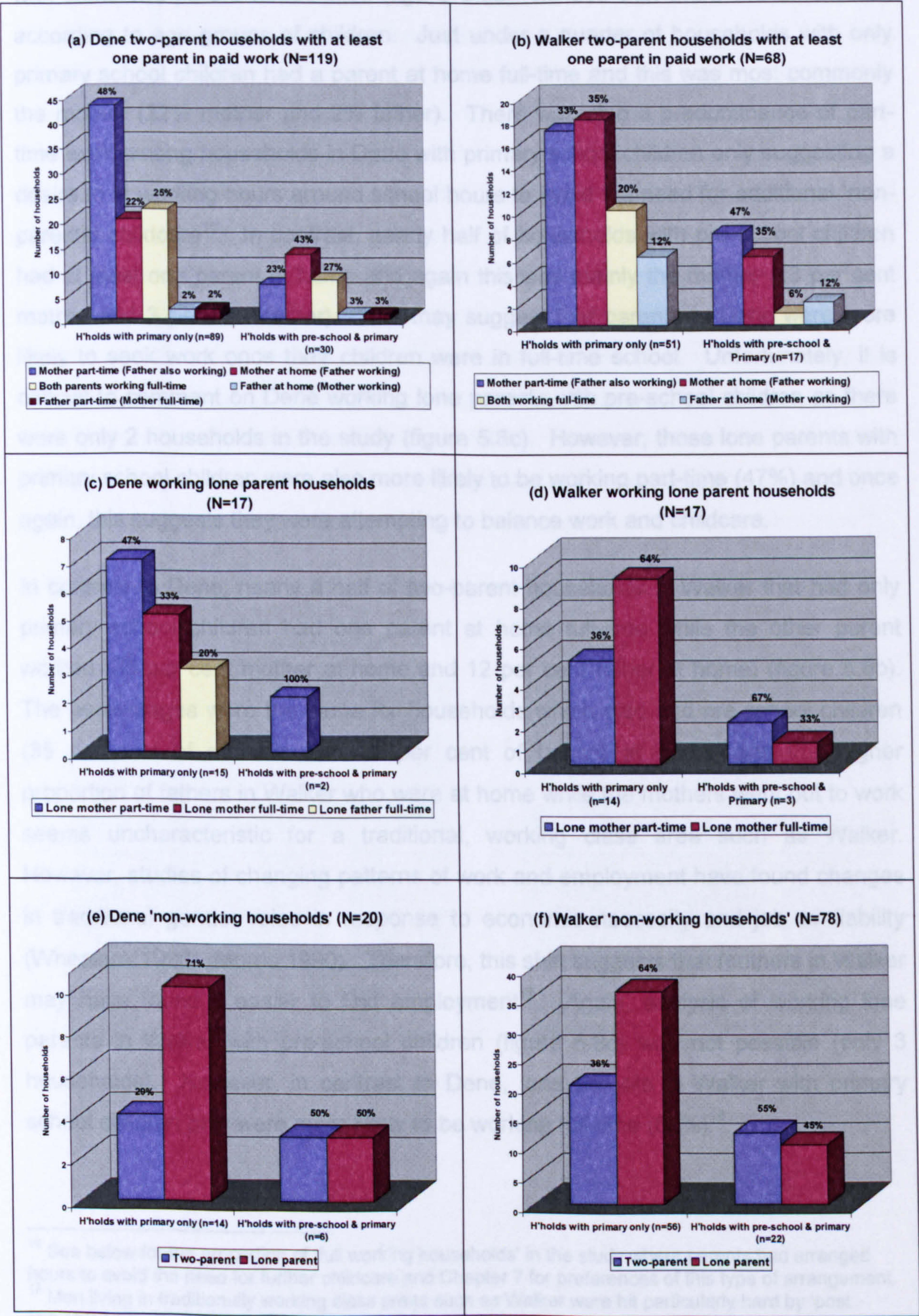


The childcare arrangements for working households with primary school only and those with both pre-school and primary school children are presented in the following section. However, to provide the household data on which to base this childcare analysis, the combined data in figure 5.8 gives details of age groups of children in relation to household type, whether two parents or lone parent and working or non-working arrangements of parents. Exploring the data in this way provides further insight into which parent was at home and available to care for the children and which households were more likely to require additional childcare to allow them to work.

Beginning with the more straightforward analysis in terms of the availability of parents to care for the children, 'non-working households' had either both parents or a lone parent at home full-time and therefore the age of children was not so important. However, the data in figure 5.8 (e) and (f) show the distribution of 'non-working households' which had either primary only, or pre-school and primary according to two-parent or lone parent status.



Figure 5.8 – Working or non-working arrangements of parents by age group of children and by ward





In households with a working parent, the analysis is more complex and beginning with Dene two-parent households (figure 5.8a), we see that there are differences according to age groups of children. Just under a quarter of households with only primary school children had a parent at home full-time and this was most commonly the mother (22% mother and 2% father). There was also a predominance of part-time work among households in Dene with primary school children only suggesting a desire to fit working hours around school hours to avoid the need for additional, non-parental childcare<sup>16</sup>. In contrast, nearly half of households with pre-school children had at least one parent at home and again this was mainly the mother (43 per cent mother and 3 per cent father). This may suggest that parents in Dene were more likely to seek work once their children were in full-time school. Unfortunately, it is difficult to comment on Dene working lone parents with pre-school children as there were only 2 households in the study (figure 5.8c). However, those lone parents with primary school children were also more likely to be working part-time (47%) and once again, this suggests they were attempting to balance work and childcare.

In contrast to Dene, nearly a half of two-parent households in Walker that had only primary school children had one parent at home full-time while the other parent worked (35 per cent mother at home and 12 per cent father at home) (figure 5.8b). The percentages were the same for households which also had pre-school children (35 per cent of mothers and 12 per cent of fathers at home) and this higher proportion of fathers in Walker who were at home while the mothers went out to work seems uncharacteristic for a traditional, working class area such as Walker. However, studies of changing patterns of work and employment have found changes in traditional gender roles in response to economic necessity and job availability (Wheelock 1990) (Morris 1990). Therefore, this shift suggests that mothers in Walker may have found it easier to find employment<sup>17</sup>. Again, analysis of working lone parents in Walker with pre-school children (figure 5.8d) was not possible (only 3 households). However, in contrast to Dene, lone parents in Walker with primary school children only were more likely to be working full-time (64%)<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> See below for the proportion of 'full working households' in the study where parents had arranged hours to avoid the need for further childcare and Chapter 7 for preferences of this type of arrangement.

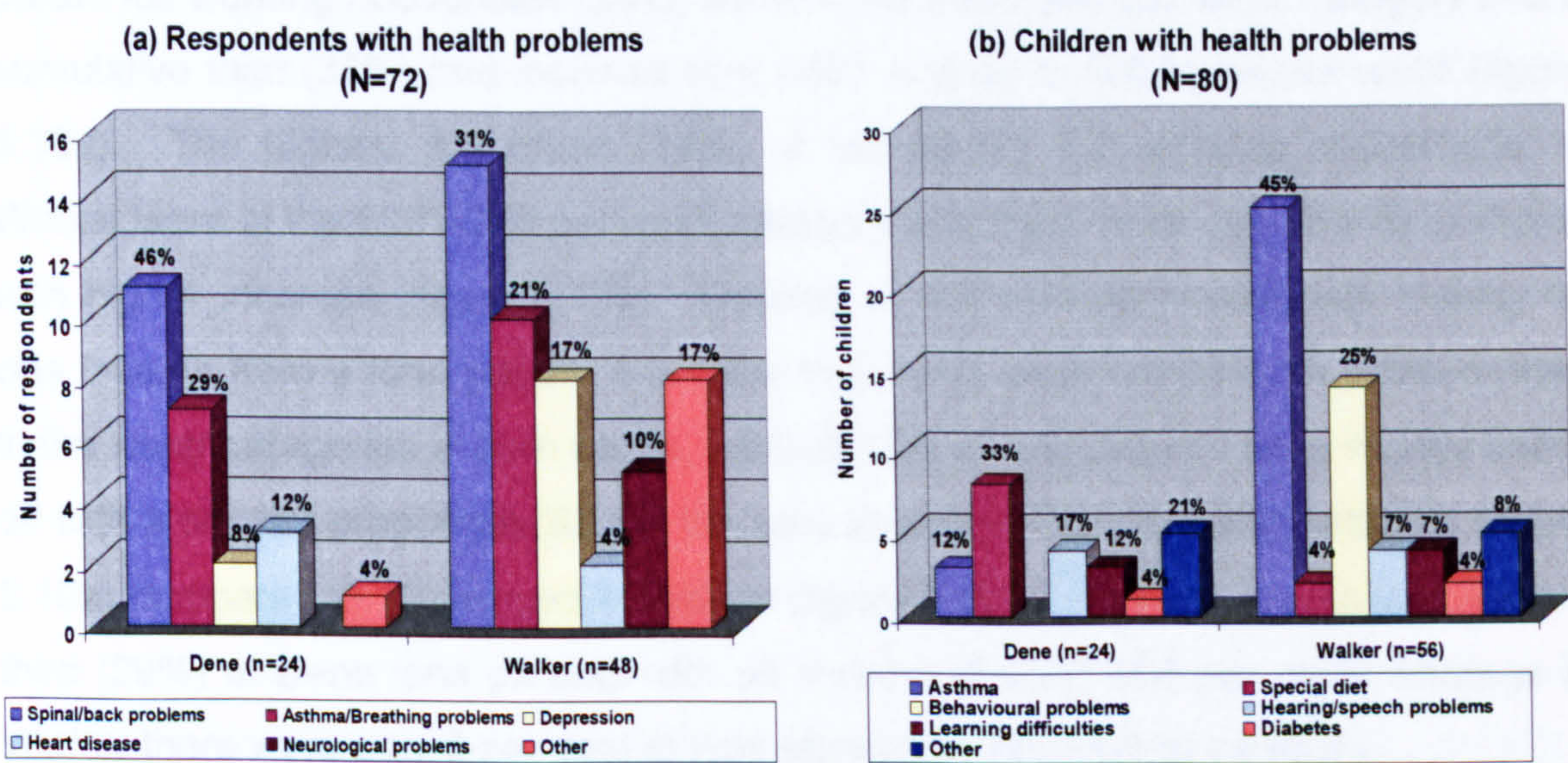
<sup>17</sup> Men living in traditionally working class areas such as Walker were hit particularly hard by 'post industrialism' with the loss of many manufacturing jobs and even now, decades later, unemployment among men is high in that ward. This has been accompanied by a growth in opportunities for women because of the expanding 'services sector'.

<sup>18</sup> This could suggest a difference in the type of jobs available to lone parents in Walker whereby, because of low wages, it would only be worth working full-time. This is discussed in the following chapter when considering decisions about work and childcare.



The final household characteristic is concerned with health and/or disabilities and of the quarter (23%) of all respondents who reported a health problem during the survey, over two-thirds (67%) of these were living in Walker (figure 5.9a)<sup>19</sup>. There were also 15 per cent of all children in the study with reported health problems and once again, the majority of these children (70%) lived in Walker (figure 5.9b). It is interesting that some of the most common health problems in Walker suggest links to environmental factors, such as asthma (21%) and depression (17%) among respondents and asthma (45%) and behavioural problems (25%) among children. This reinforces the well-documented association between poor health and area deprivation. Recent evidence produced using data from the British Household Panel Survey confirmed that the main correlates are social class (linking lower social class to poor health), housing tenure (those living in council accommodation linked to poor health) and financial hardship (Berthoud 2000). As demonstrated in this section, families living in the Walker ward were more likely to meet all of the above criteria and therefore this is yet a further indicator of differences in socio-economic status<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 5.9 – Reported health problems of study respondents and children by ward**



<sup>19</sup> The 'other' category in this analysis combines very unusual conditions where there was only one reported case in each.

<sup>20</sup> As well as a further indicator of socio-economic status, health problems or disabilities of children can also be problematic in terms of access to formal childcare (Jones et al. 2000) and it was hoped that this could have been investigated more thoroughly in the study in relation to the vital role of complementary childcare in these situations. Unfortunately, there were too few numbers in each cell to allow a detailed statistical analysis.



## Livelihood characteristics

Families in this study were sustaining their economic livelihoods in different ways, some through paid work while others relied on state benefits. Household weekly incomes were extremely variable dependent on interrelated factors such as ward of residence, two-parent or lone parent status, gender and access to certain types of occupations. Level of income is also a key indicator of socio-economic status of households and was particularly relevant in terms of the research presented here as income also affected the range of childcare options available if parents wanted to continue to work or (re)enter the labour market<sup>21</sup>. To highlight the differences in income, figure 5.10 compares net weekly incomes for 'full working', 'partially working' and 'non-working' households allowing a comparison to be made both within and between the wards<sup>22</sup>.

As would be expected, the net weekly incomes for 'full working' two-parent households, where both parents were in paid work, were highest overall. However, there were differences between the wards as the highest proportion of Dene two-parent full working households (26%) were in the £401-500 per week category and a cumulative third (33%) had incomes over £601 and up to £800 plus per week (figure 5.10a). The highest proportion (34%) of two-parent 'full working households' in Walker were in the £201-300 per week category and there were very few households with higher incomes (figure 5.10b). Looking at 'full working households' relying on one income from a lone parent, it is clear that these were consistently concentrated in the lower categories in both wards, although Dene lone parents were slightly better off with a smaller proportion (6%) in the very lowest <£100 per week category (figure 5.10a) compared to 12 per cent in Walker (figure 5.10b). There was also just under a third (29%) of Dene lone parents with an income of £301-400 per week whereas in Walker there were only 6 per cent of lone parents in this income category.

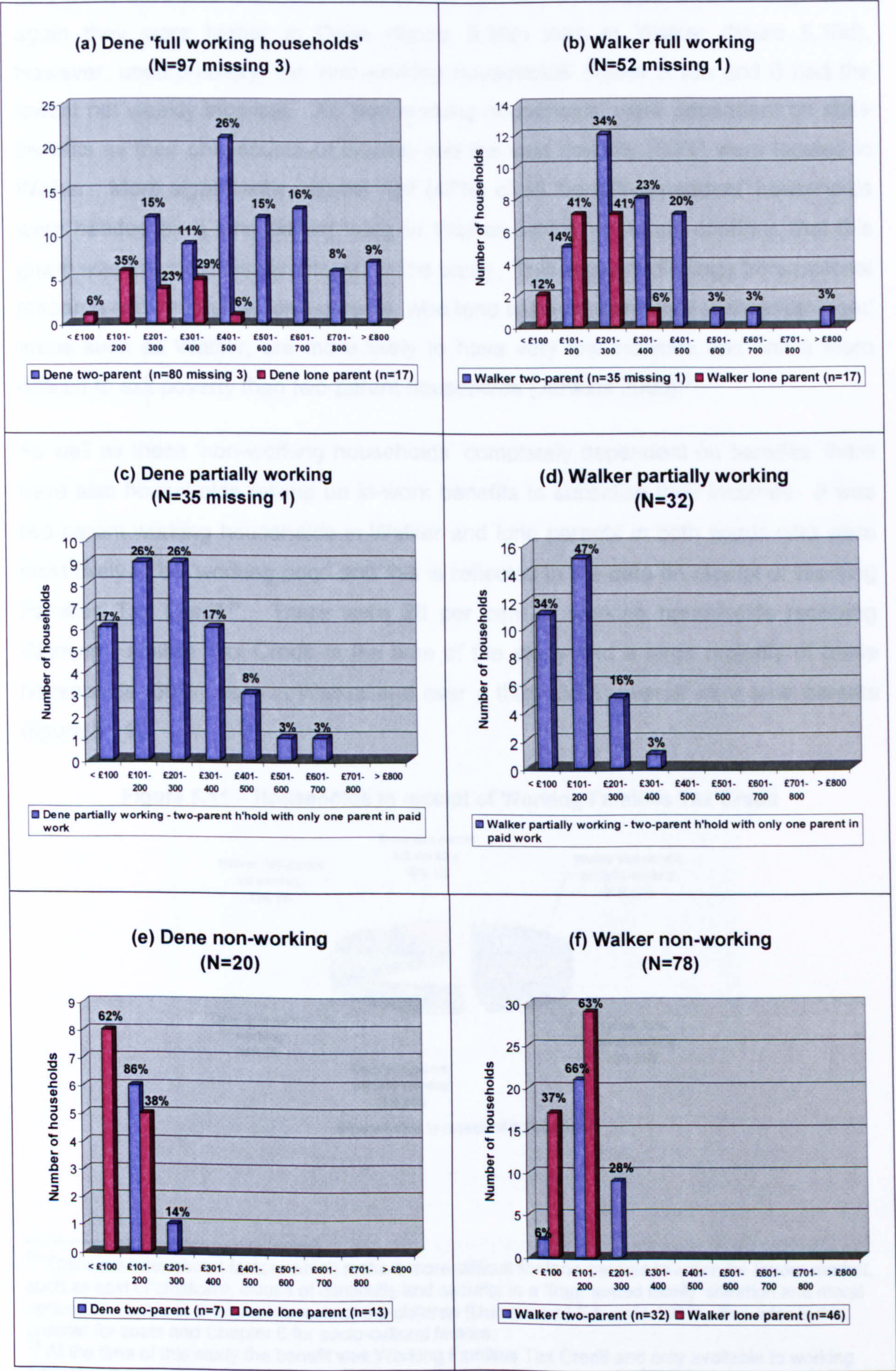
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<sup>21</sup> The cost of childcare in relation to levels of income and barriers to employment are discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 6.

<sup>22</sup> There are five missing cases in this analysis where respondents did not want to give their net weekly incomes. Net weekly income included all earnings from employment or investments, all benefits, child maintenance/support or a combination of these sources.



Figure 5.10 – Net weekly income for ‘full working’, ‘partially working’ and ‘non-working’ households by ward and two-parent or lone parent status

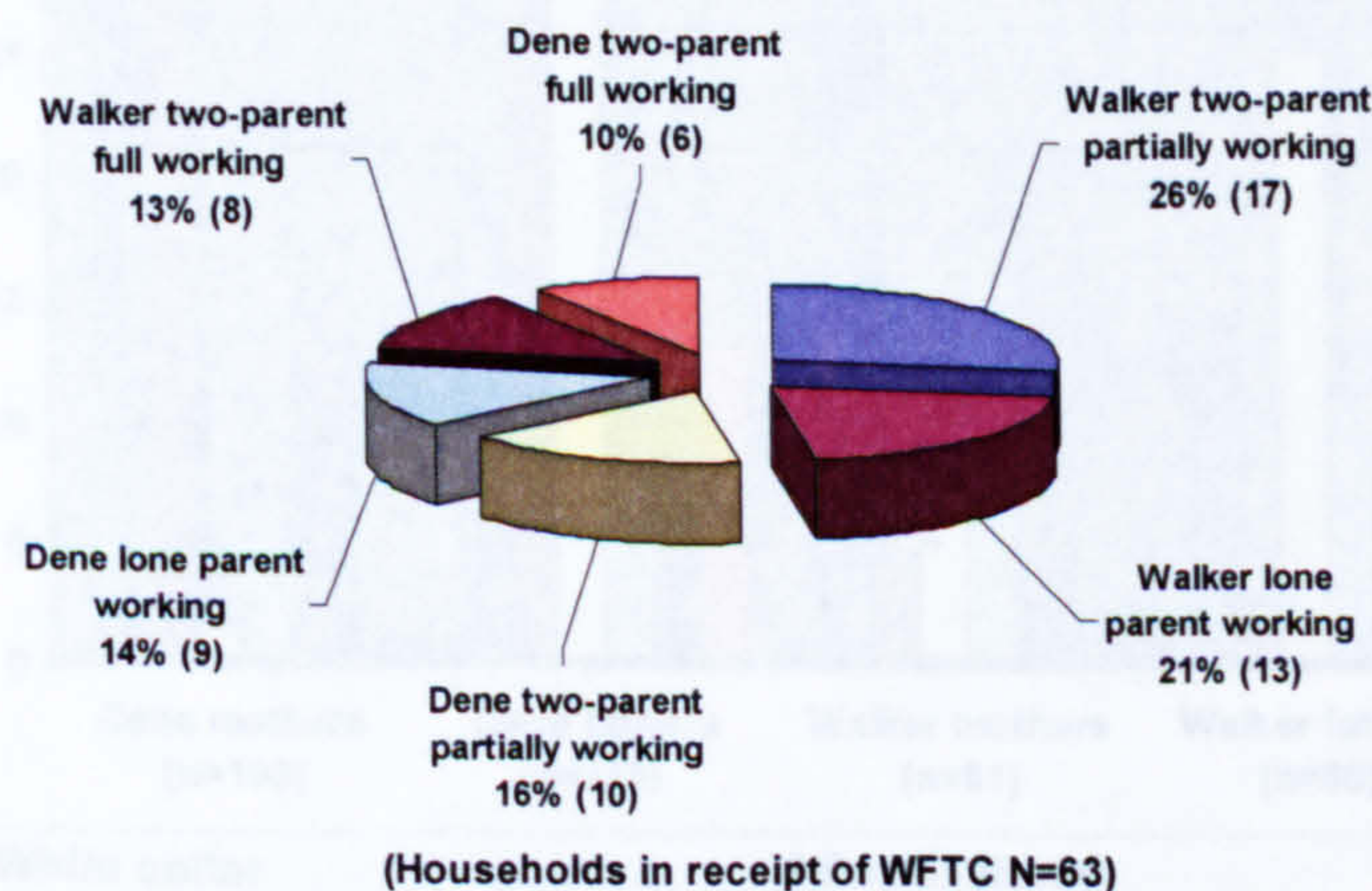




Incomes in 'partially working households', where only one of the two parents was in paid work, were also lower than households with two working parents, although once again they were higher in Dene (figure 5.10c) than in Walker (figure 5.10d). However, unsurprisingly, the 'non-working households' (figure 5.10e and f) had the lowest net weekly incomes. All 'non-working households' were dependent on state benefits as their only source of income and the vast majority (80%) were located in Walker. More significantly, almost half (47%) of all 'benefit-dependent' households were headed by a lone parent living in Walker, which yet again confirms that this group was the most disadvantaged in the study. This supports findings from national research confirming that lone parents, who tend to be concentrated in disadvantaged areas such as Walker, are more likely to have very low incomes and find it more difficult to exit poverty than two-parent households (Jenkins 2000)<sup>23</sup>.

As well as these 'non-working households' completely dependent on benefits, there were also households relying on in-work benefits to subsidise their incomes. It was two-parent working households in Walker and lone parents in both wards who were most likely to be 'working poor' and this is reflected in the data on receipt of Working Families Tax Credit<sup>24</sup>. There were 28 per cent of working households receiving Working Families Tax Credit at the time of the study and a large majority of these households (60%) were in Walker and over a third (35%) overall were lone parents (figure 5.11).

**Figure 5.11 – Households in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit**



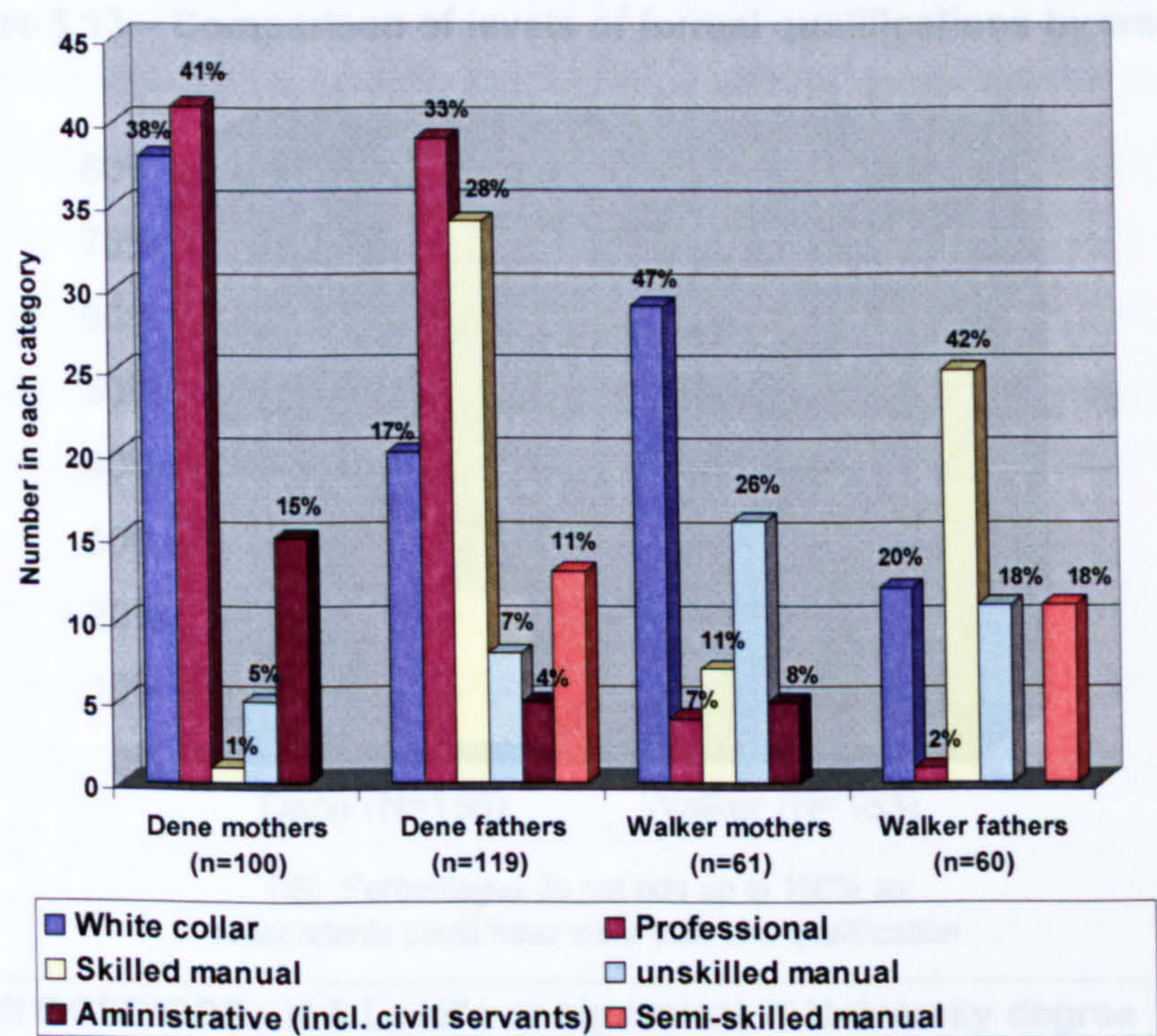
<sup>23</sup> There are interrelated factors which make it more difficult for lone parents to enter the labour market, such as cost of childcare, issues of continuity and security in a 'fragmented family' situation and moral notions of what is in the best interests of the children (Duncan and Edwards 1997). See later in this chapter for costs and Chapter 6 for socio-cultural factors.

<sup>24</sup> At the time of this study the benefit was Working Families Tax Credit and only available to working households with dependent children. This has since been changed to Working Tax Credit, available to all low income households.



Levels of income are associated with access to types of occupation and this is influenced by access to certain ‘capitals’ affecting social position whereby some people are able to achieve higher financial and social status than others (Bourdieu 1983). In particular, in the context of this study, ‘class’<sup>25</sup> and ‘gender’ job segregation are important and while it was not an aim of this study to specifically research employment inequalities, data is provided to consider how potential earnings from employment influence decisions about work and childcare (McRae 2003) (Ward et al. 1996)<sup>26</sup>. With this in mind, the job titles provided by respondents for all working parents in the study were categorised using six classifications broadly in line with level of skill required and the additional requirements for professional training and qualifications to do the job described (Appendix 12)<sup>27</sup>. The results highlighted clear differences along the lines of ‘class’ job segregation especially in the professional occupation category which was most common for both mothers (41%) and fathers (33%) in Dene ward compared to mothers (7%) and fathers (2%) in Walker (figure 5.12). In contrast, there were higher percentages of lower paid, unskilled manual workers in Walker among mother (26%) and fathers (18%).

Figure 5.12 – Comparison of occupations for mothers and fathers by ward



<sup>25</sup> To remind the reader, social class in this study was not identified using standard stratification methods based entirely on occupation, but rather along the lines of access to certain ‘capitals’ (social, cultural and economic) (Bourdieu 1983) as indicators of socio-economic position. However, as will be demonstrated in this section, occupation was related to social class.

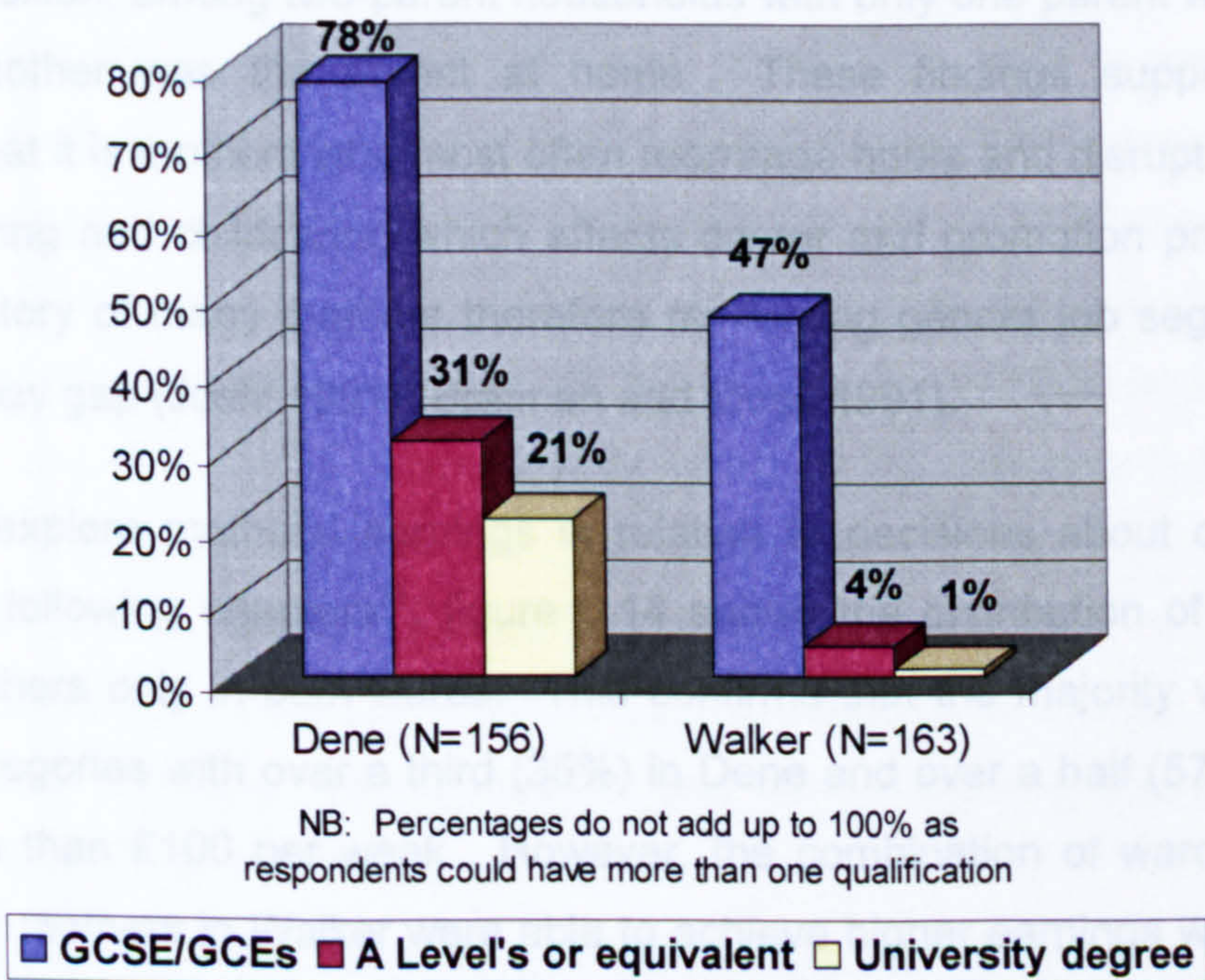
<sup>26</sup> The combined influence of class and gender in relation to childcare options and constraints to employment for mothers is explored further in Chapter 6.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 12 for a discussion of how these categories were selected and examples of occupations in each group.



The association between social disadvantage as a structural constraint preventing access to higher status and better-paid occupations is well documented (Buck 2000). This is fuelled by the 'self-maintaining properties' (Goldthorpe 2000) of social class which continues to lead to privilege for some while marginalising others and has the most dramatic effect on educational attainment which is consistently lower among those living in socially disadvantaged areas (Taylor 2000). In this study, respondents in Dene were far more likely to have higher levels of formal qualifications with over three-quarters (78%) who had GCSE/GCEs, nearly a third (31%) who had A-Levels and nearly a quarter (21%) who had a university degree. In comparison, less than a half (47%) of respondents in Walker had GCSE/GCEs with only 4 per cent who had A-levels and only one respondent who had a university degree (figure 5.13). This evidence of higher levels of formal education among respondents in Dene compared to those in Walker is yet a further indication of the social differences between the wards as it directly influences the types of jobs they are able to consider. In turn, this may also affect the options available for childcare because of economic but also social factors because of how some forms of childcare may be perceived or understood according to levels of education.

**Figure 5.13 – Comparison of levels of formal qualifications by ward**





There was also evidence of gender job segregation with mothers less likely to be in high status, higher earning occupations and once again this is relevant in the context of this study because of the impact decisions about childcare and re(entry) into the labour market. While it was not been possible to show every occupation of mothers and fathers in the analysis (figure 5.12), further exploration of the survey data revealed the differences within the occupational categories. For example, although a third (28%) of all mothers were working in professional categories, over half of these were in the lower paid professions such as nursing with nearly a quarter in teaching. Furthermore, overall mothers' occupations were concentrated in 'white collar' jobs (42%) and nearly two-thirds of these were in lower paid general office work and over a third in retail. In comparison, of the fathers in the professional category (22%), almost a half were working in higher paid management positions in finance, education or construction. Of those fathers in the "skilled manual' category (33%), nearly a third were in working in the higher earning trades such as electrical or industrial engineering.

Considering this disparity between mothers and fathers in job status and potential earnings in terms of childcare responsibilities, as demonstrated in the previous section, it was most likely for working mothers in the study to be working part-time hours. In addition, among two-parent households with only one parent working, most often the mother was the parent at home. These findings support evidence elsewhere that it is mothers who most often rearrange hours and disrupt employment for childbearing and childcaring which affects career and promotion prospects over the work history of many mothers therefore reinforcing gender job segregation and the gender pay gap (Joshi 1991) (Brannen and Moss 1991).

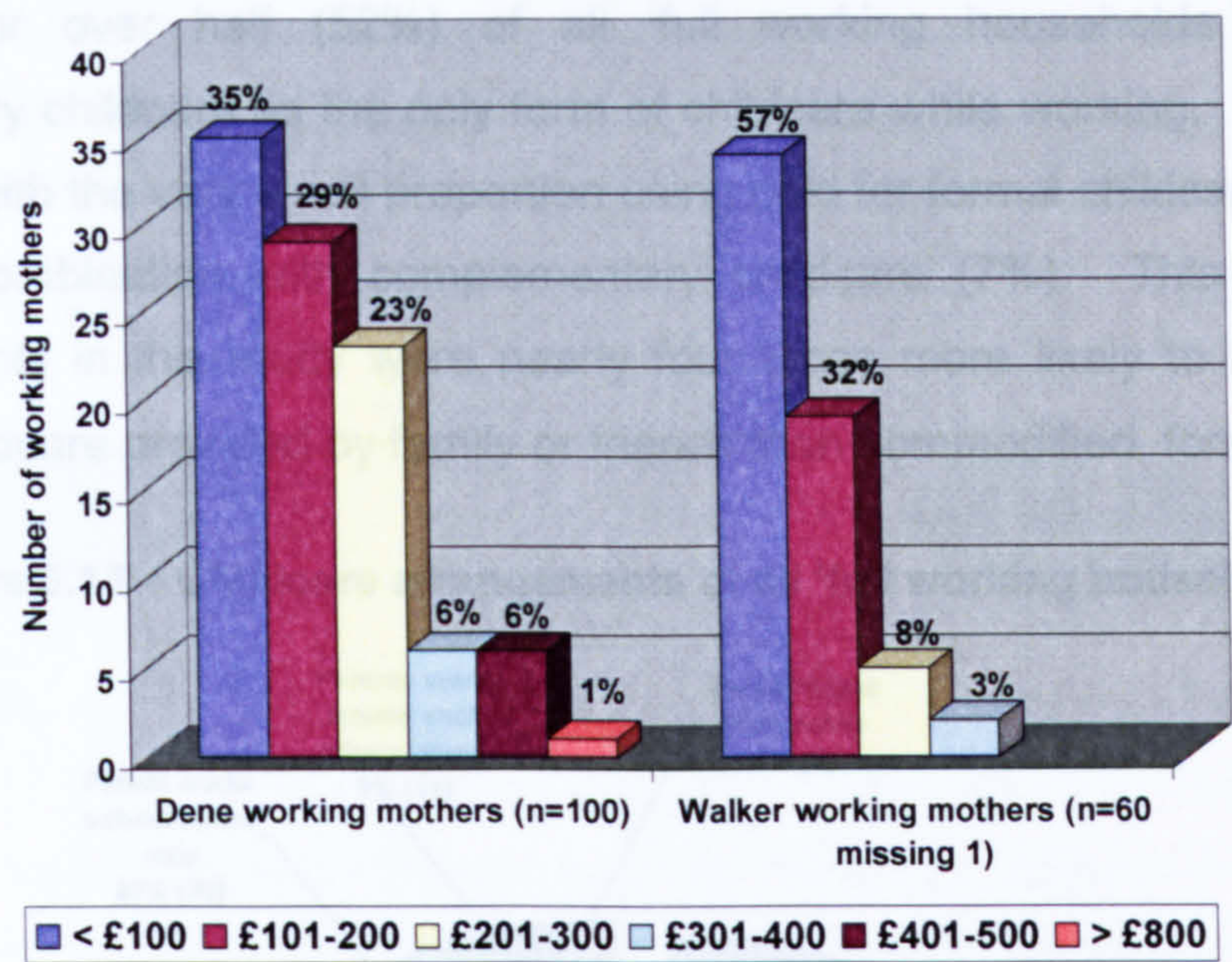
In order to explore mothers' earnings in relation to decisions about childcare and work in the following chapters<sup>28</sup>, figure 5.14 shows the distribution of earnings for working mothers only in both wards. This confirms that the majority were in lower earnings categories with over a third (35%) in Dene and over a half (57%) in Walker earning less than £100 per week. However, the combination of ward and gender meant fewer mothers in Walker were able to achieve higher earnings with only 8 per cent in the £201-300 per week compared to nearly a quarter (23%) in Dene. Furthermore, all mothers in the higher earnings categories of £401-500 per week or above lived in Dene.

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<sup>28</sup> Studies have shown that calculations of the cost of childcare versus paid work most often centre on mothers' earnings (Brannen and Moss 1991).



Figure 5.14 – Mothers’ earnings from employment by ward



‘Full working households’ and their childcare patterns

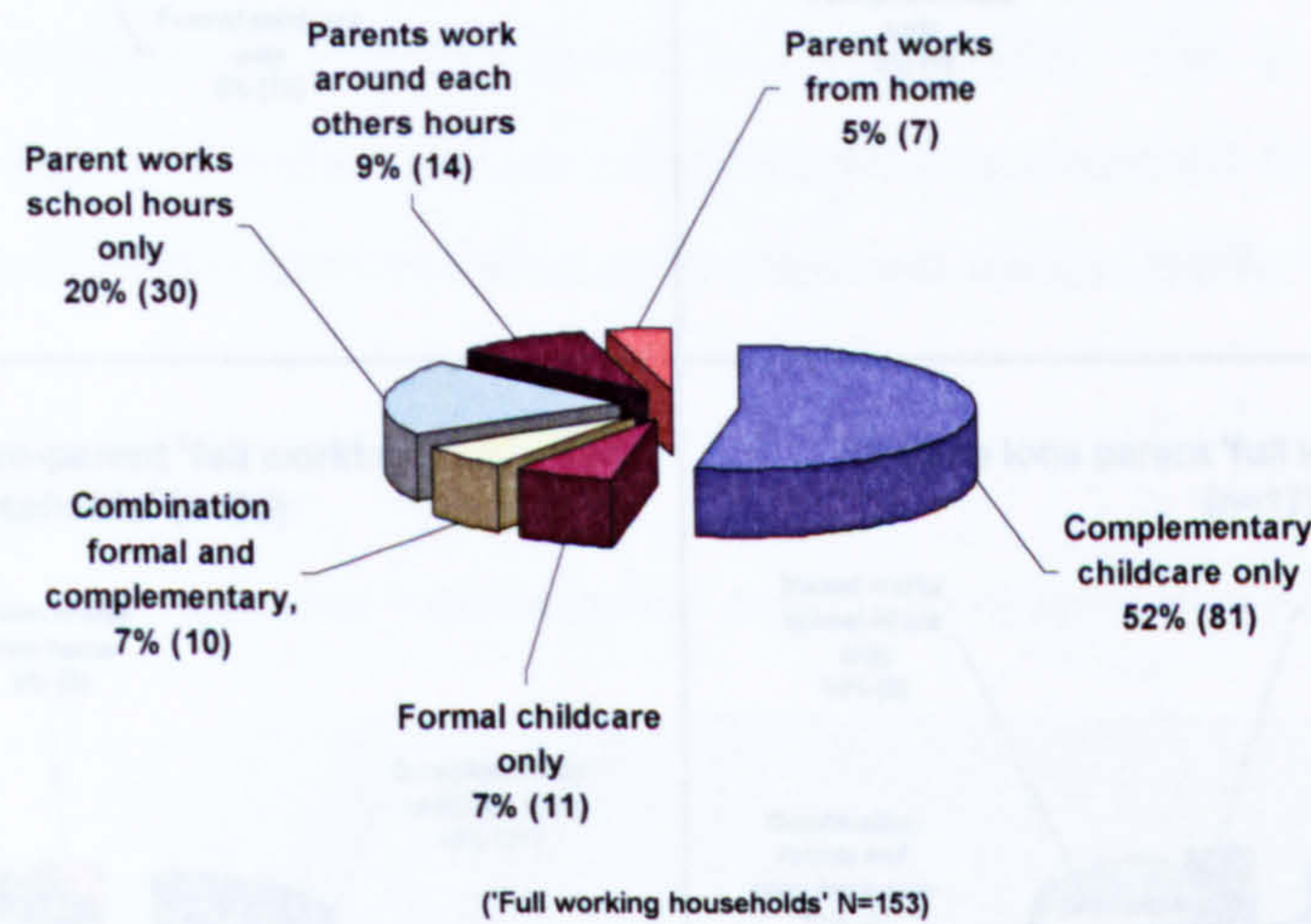
Having described the social and economic characteristics of the households and demonstrated the contrasts between the two wards, this first section on childcare patterns considers how parents in ‘full working households’ managed their childcare. As both parents (or the lone parent) in these households were in paid work, they were more likely to be using some form of additional, non-parental ‘substitute childcare’ on a regular weekly basis than households with at least one non-working parent ( $X^2 = 13.03 (1), p=0.000$ ). To begin this analysis, figure 5.15 provides an overview of childcare arrangements for all ‘full working households’ and this includes a substantial one-third (34%) of households where parents had avoided the need for additional, non-parental childcare as they were able to utilise the more positive aspects of shift work and flexible working arrangements. This included parents working within school hours (20%), two-parent households where the parents were able to arrange childcare around mothers and fathers working hours (9%) and a small percentage (5%) where a parent was working from home<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> These patterns of parental childcare self-sufficiency were extremely desirable among many parents in the study that would have preferred working hours that allowed them to look after their own children. This highlights an important role for childcare policy in facilitating these types of ‘family friendly’ arrangements. See Chapter 6 for further discussion of parental preferences regarding hours of work and Chapter 8 for possible policy solutions.



However, what is extremely clear from this analysis is that the largest majority, accounting for over half (52%) of all ‘full working households,’ were using complementary childcare as the only form of childcare while working. This contrasts dramatically with the very small proportion using paid for formal childcare either alone (7%) or in combination with complementary childcare (7%). This confirms that working parents in this study were nearly four times more likely to be using non-marketed childcare provided by family or friends than commodified, formal childcare.

**Figure 5.15 – Childcare arrangements of all ‘full working households’**

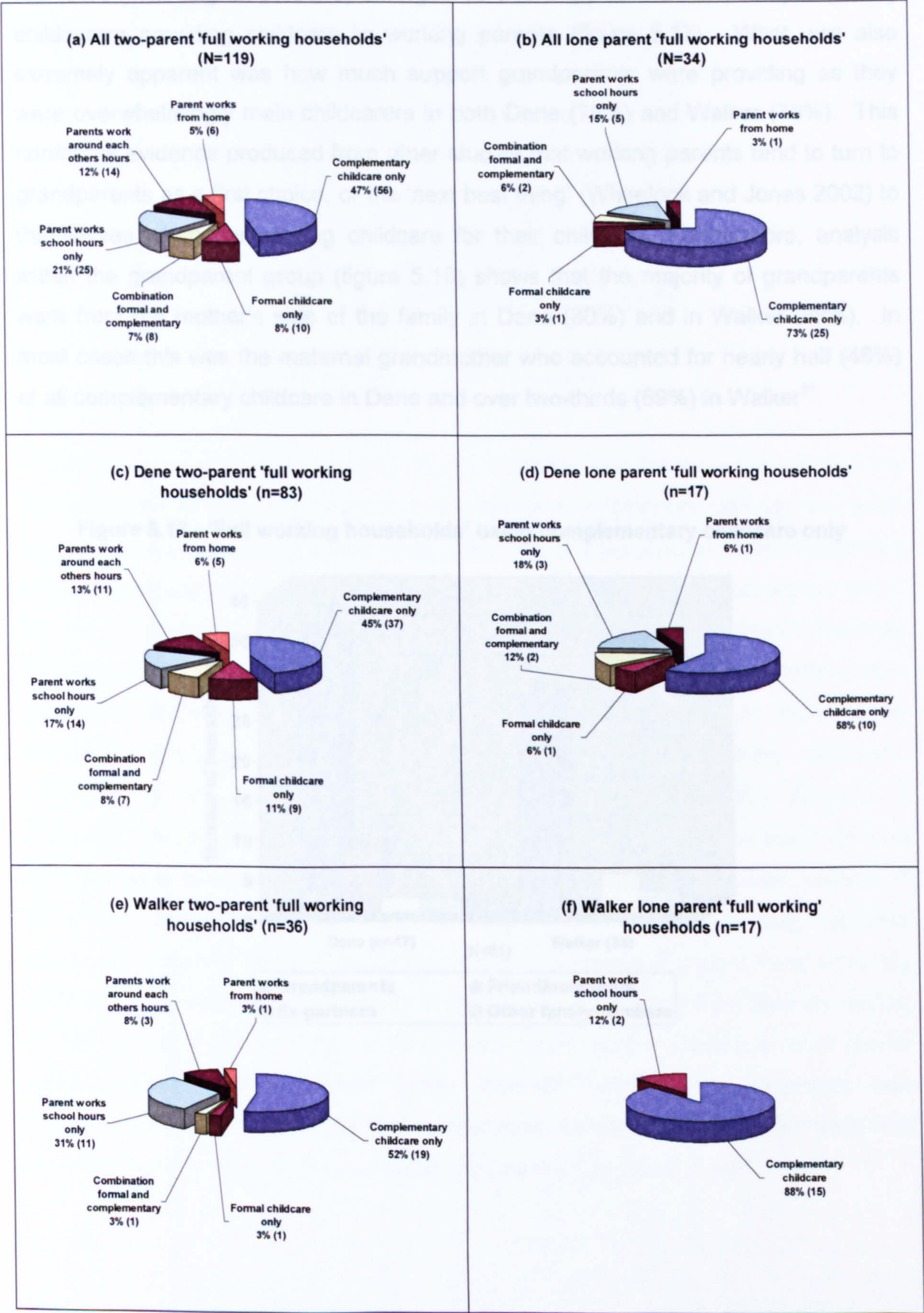


A separate analysis of two-parent or lone parent households in each ward (figure 5.16) allows a more detailed comparison of childcare arrangements by household type and socio-economic status. The findings show that households in Walker were particularly high users of complementary childcare as it accounted for over half (52%) of childcare used by two-parent households (figure 5.16e) and the vast majority (88%) of lone parent households (figure 5.16f). Measuring this statistically, despite the high use in both wards, it was more likely for parents in Walker to be using complementary childcare as the only form of childcare while working than those in Dene ( $X^2 = 7.69 (1), p=0.004$ ). This suggestion of a link between the use of complementary childcare and lower socio-economic status, is supported further by the high use among the lowest income group, lone parents, especially those living in Walker, but also among lone parents living in Dene (58%) (figure 5.16d). In contrast almost all (90%) of the 21 households in the study using some type of formal childcare were in Dene ward. Again, this suggests a link between type of childcare used and socio-economic status as working households in Dene had higher incomes and were therefore in a better financial position to pay for childcare<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> See below for data on childcare use by household income.



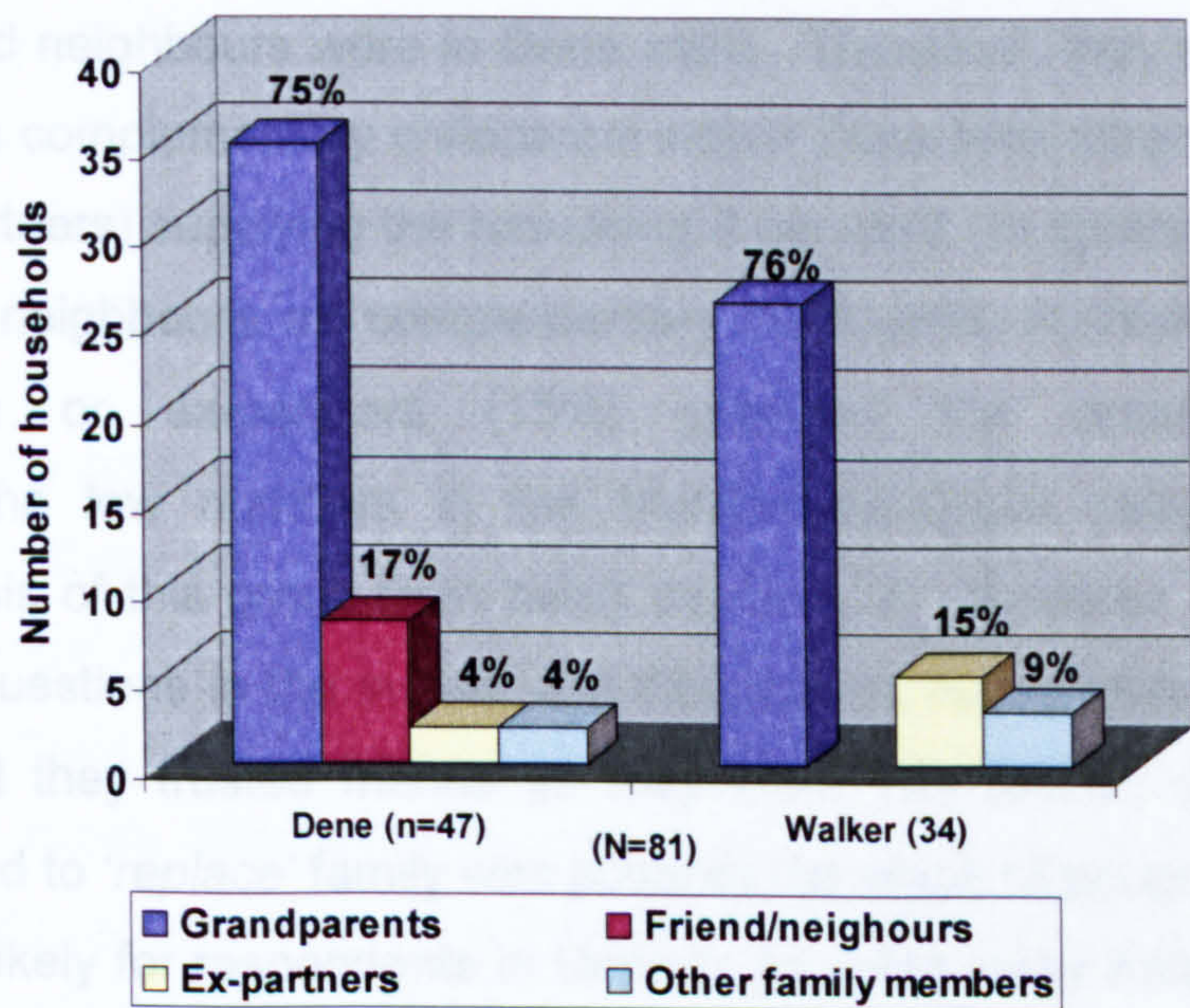
Figure 5.16 – Childcare arrangements of ‘full working’ two-parent and lone parent households’





When looking more closely at the households using complementary childcare, family members (including ex-partners) emerged very strongly as the main complementary childcarers providing childcare to working parents (figure 5.17). What was also extremely apparent was how much support grandparents were providing as they were overwhelmingly main childcarers in both Dene (75%) and Walker (76%). This reinforces evidence produced from other studies that working parents tend to turn to grandparents as a first choice, or the ‘next best thing’ (Wheelock and Jones 2002) to themselves when considering childcare for their children. Furthermore, analysis within the grandparent group (figure 5.18) shows that the majority of grandparents were from the mother’s side of the family in Dene (80%) and in Walker (88%). In most cases this was the maternal grandmother who accounted for nearly half (46%) of all complementary childcare in Dene and over two-thirds (69%) in Walker<sup>31</sup>.

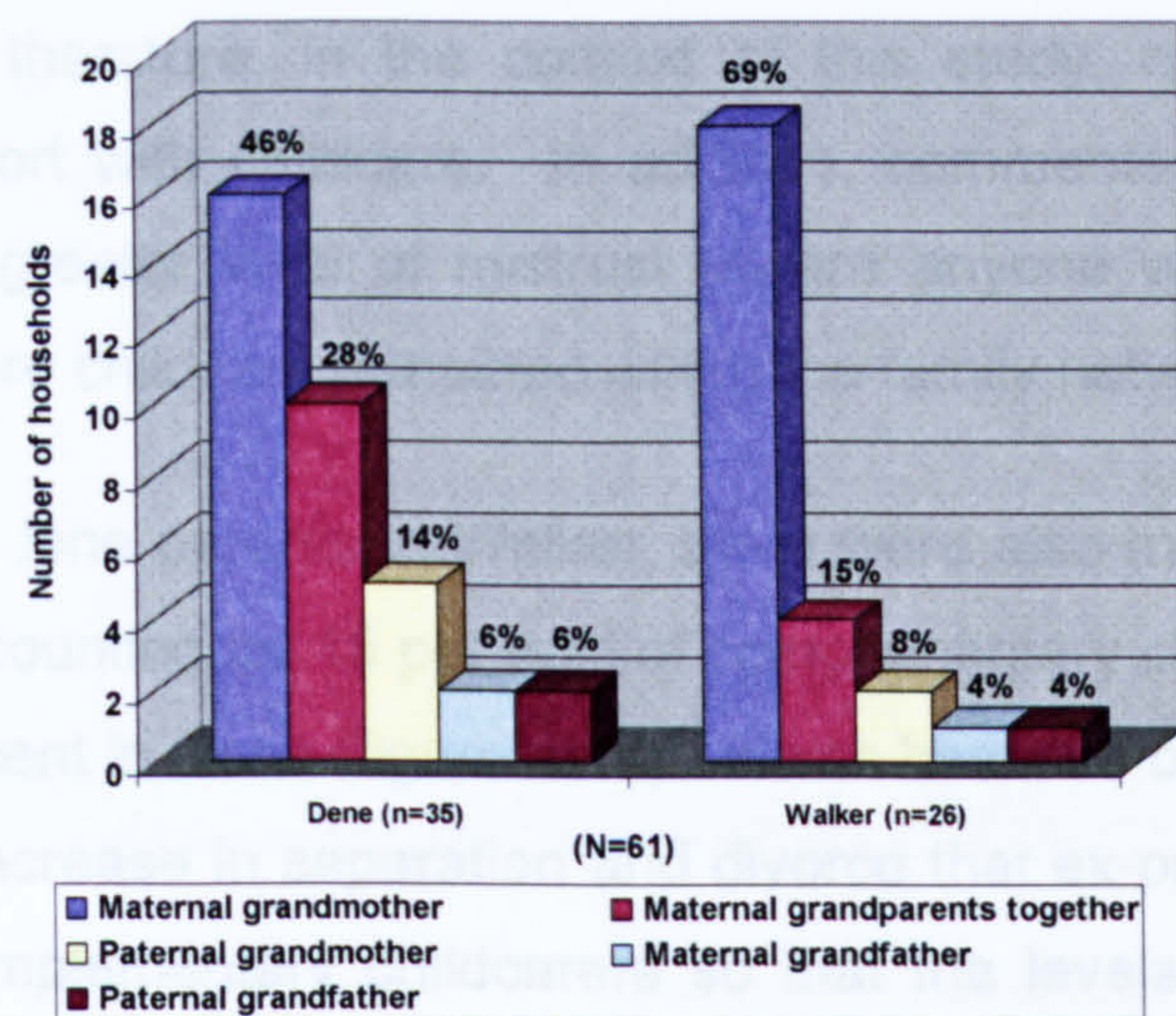
**Figure 5.17 - ‘Full working households’ using complementary childcare only**



<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the ‘hierarchy of care’ (Qureshi and Walker 1989) linking this to the gendered reproduction of mothering transmitted through the mother-daughter relationship (Chodorow 1979) which suggests that maternal grandmothers will be the first choice as complementary childcarers.



Figure 5.18 – Grandparents providing complementary childcare to ‘full working households’



Returning to the analysis in figure 5.17, this illustrates that the main difference in the use of complementary childcare was in the friends or neighbours category and while overall they were providing a very small proportion of childcare, all of the households using friends and neighbours were in Dene ward. Therefore, they accounted for 17 per cent of main complementary childcarers within Dene with other family members (including ex-partners) supplying the remaining 8 per cent. In contrast, as there were no friends and neighbours as complementary childcarers in Walker, other family members (9%) or ex-partners (15%) provided the remaining childcare. Unfortunately, the low numbers in the friends/neighbours category prevents a statistical analysis of this group from being carried out. However, drawing on data from the open questions in the survey and discussions during interviews, parents in Dene ward said they trusted friends as they were ‘*like family*’, or they ‘*replaced family*’. This need to ‘*replace*’ family was possibly the result of geographical proximity as it was more likely for respondents in Dene to be living away from their immediate family. Almost a quarter (23%) of ‘full working households’ in Dene lived over eleven miles away from their closest family member<sup>32</sup> and this is consistent with demographic information for the City of Newcastle, as this shows Dene is a ward with greater inward mobility from other areas (Newcastle City Council 1997).

<sup>32</sup> For the question asking ‘distance living from next of kin’, 11+ miles was the highest category, therefore, it is unknown exactly how far away some families were living from their extended family. However, examples from this study suggest that childcare over 10 miles away created serious travel and stress problems for parents (see following chapter).



In comparison, the population in Walker is extremely stable (Newcastle City Council 1997) with a higher tendency for extended families to be living in very close proximity to each other and therefore, in the context of this study, are more likely to be accessible for support with childcare. In addition, comments from respondents in Walker reflected a greater level of mistrust toward anyone who was not a family member and therefore childcare remained within the family network<sup>33</sup>.

As there were more lone parents in Walker, there were also more ex-partners (non-resident fathers) accounting for 15 per cent of complementary childcarers in this ward compared to 9 per cent in Dene (figure 5.17). It was because of the changing nature of 'family' and the increase in separation and divorce that ex-partners were included in this study as complementary childcarers so that the levels of childcare support they provided could be considered. Studies have shown that some fathers become more actively involved in their children's lives when they move out of the family home and while they are often more likely to spend time on leisure activities, there are also signs of changing patterns in post-separation parenthood (Smart and Neale 1999). In situations of co-parenting in particular, research has shown that some fathers take on more childcare responsibilities and, as shown in this study, may provide vital childcare support to allow lone mothers to work and this has implications for policy in terms of family friendly working policies for fathers as well as mothers<sup>34</sup>.

Turning now to the proportion of 'full working households' using some type of formal childcare to allow them to work, either alone or in combination with complementary childcare<sup>35</sup>, the most common type of formal childcare was registered childminders (figure 5.19). Almost all of the formal childcare was being used by households in Dene and in all cases, this was a registered childminder either alone (52%) or in various combinations of registered childminder and family or friends. There were only two households in Walker using formal childcare, one using a workplace crèche and the other combining an after-school club with help from a neighbour.

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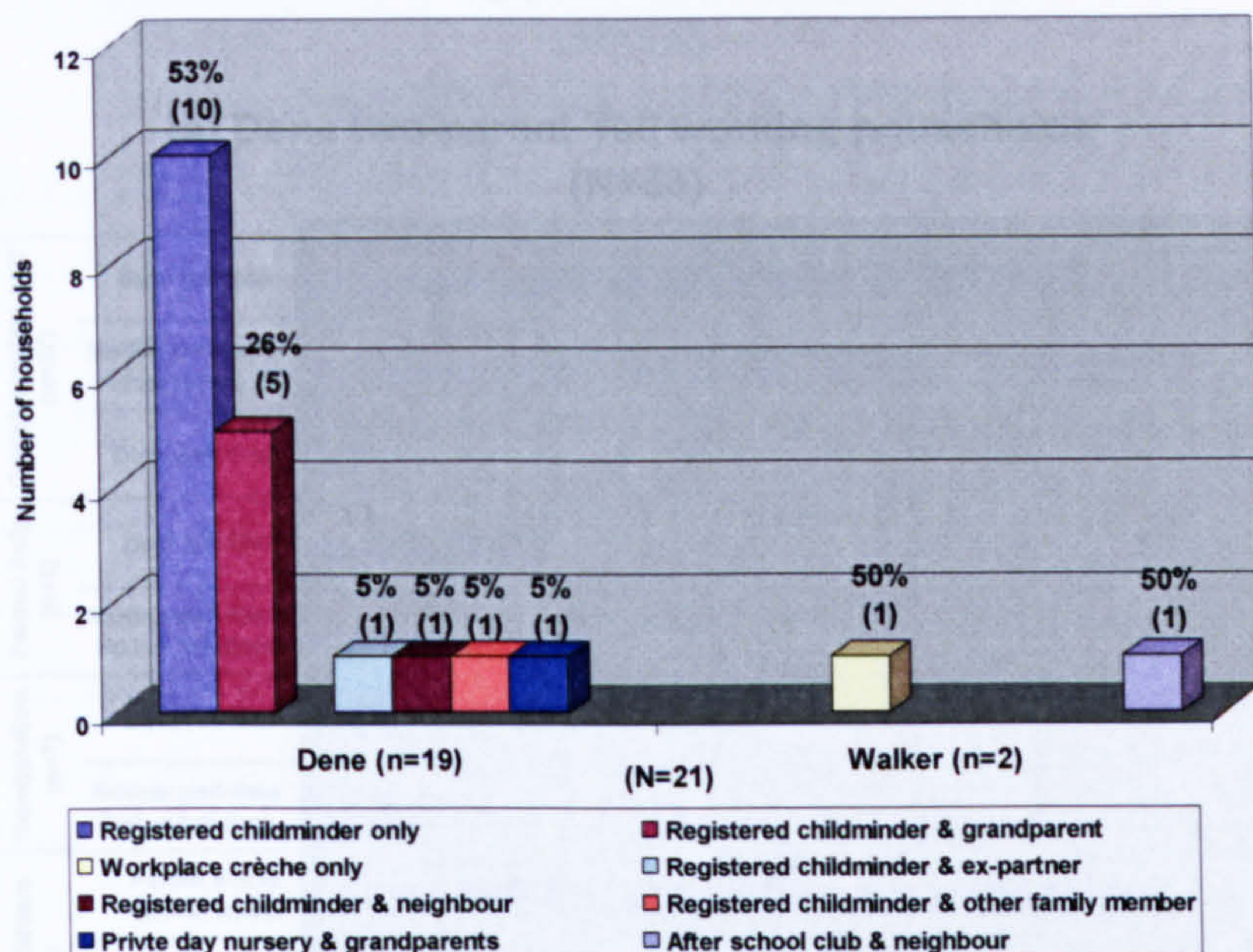
<sup>33</sup> The prevalence of 'trust issues' as a barrier to certain types of childcare in Walker ward in particular is discussed at length in the following chapter.

<sup>34</sup> The policy discussion in chapter 8 discusses family friendly policies for all mothers and fathers.

<sup>35</sup> For the purposes of analysis households using formal alone or in combination have been combined as numbers were very small in both groups. As shown in figure 5.19, there were a number of categories where only one household was using a particular type of childcare. Each has been included separately to demonstrate the range of childcare arrangements.



Figure 5.19 - Formal childcare used by 'full working households'



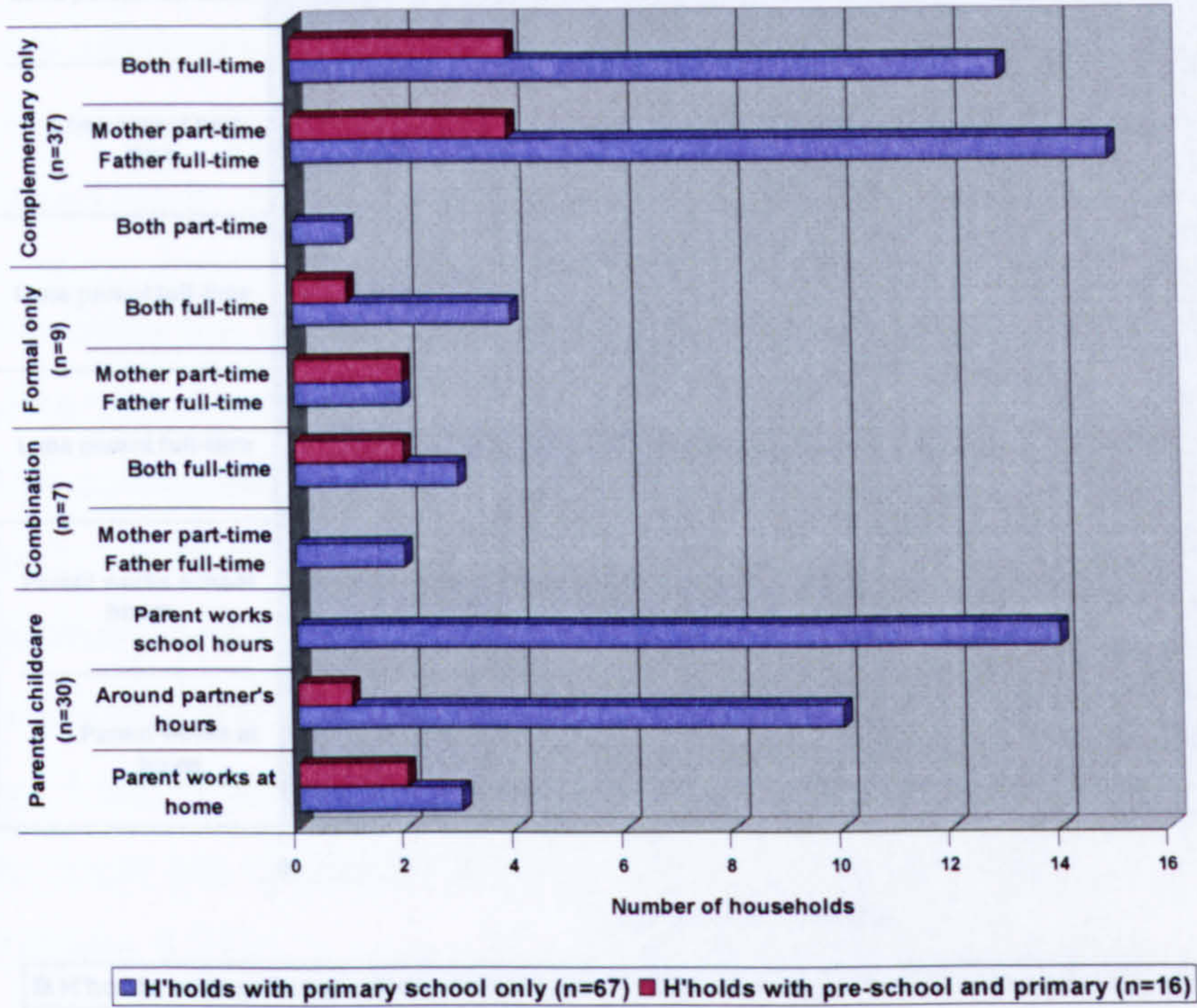
Other studies have found more evidence of a 'childcare jigsaw' whereby parents use a mix of formal and complementary childcare in order to manage their weekly childcare (Wheelock and Jones 2002). However, this was less apparent in this study (only 7 per cent of 'full working households') and this appeared to be related to the age of the children as the majority were in full-time school, unlike the Wheelock *et al* study where nearly half (45%) of households had pre-school children. In order to explore this more fully a complex analysis that incorporated age groups of children, work patterns of parents and childcare used was carried out. This combined analysis (figure 5.20a to d) brings together all of the households characteristics already discussed and once again highlights the disproportionate number of households with primary school children only and the high proportion of households with a parent (usually a mother) working part-time or within school hours. Viewing this in terms of childcare on a regular, weekly basis, the main requirement was for 'wrap-around' care for before and/or after school. Therefore, this suggests that parents were able to avoid a 'childcare jigsaw' and in most cases, would only require one person or type of childcare to cover these hours, especially in households with a parent working part-time<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> See below for childcare during school holidays which shows that the 'childcare jigsaw' was evident once childcare was required for full days.

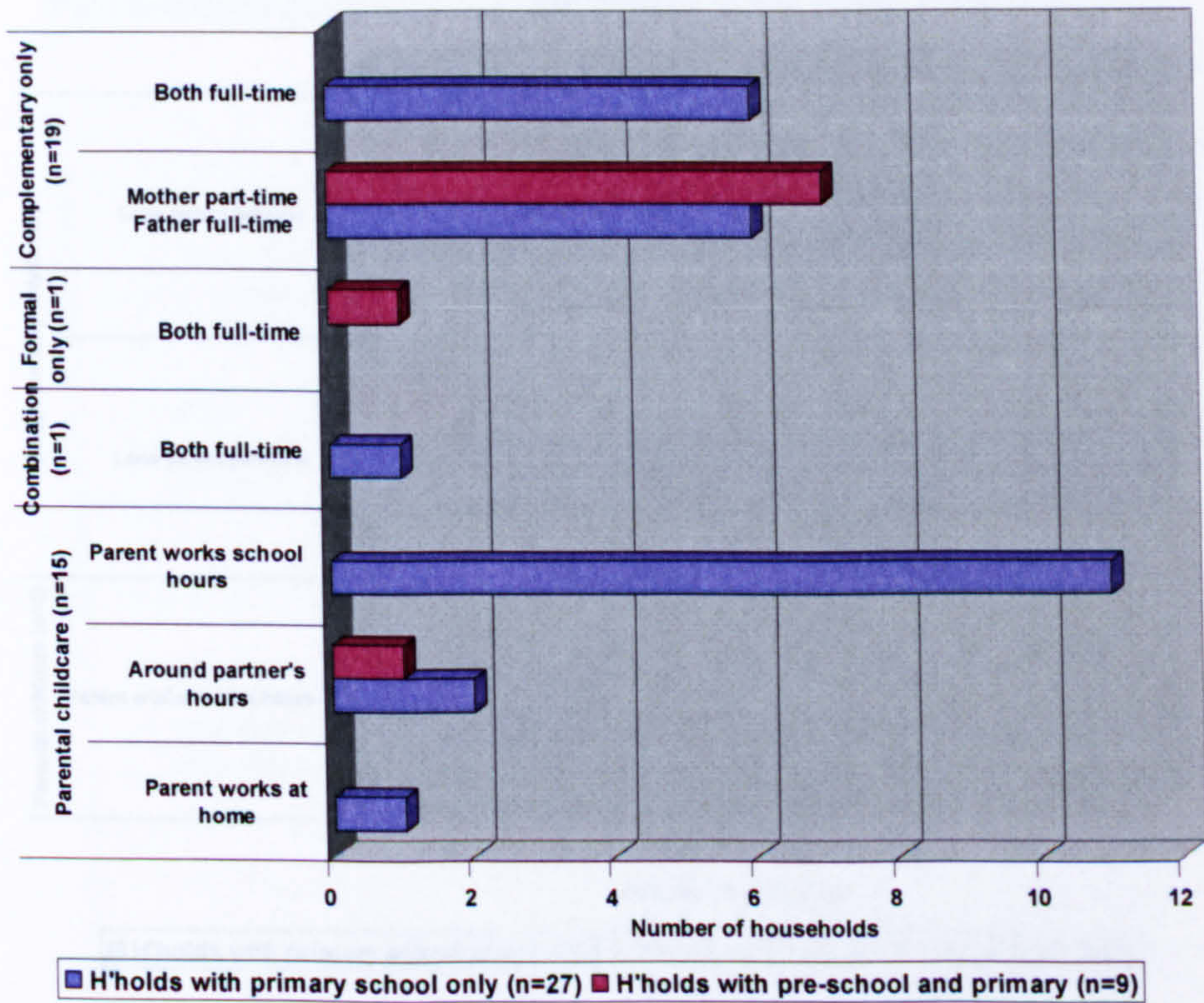


Figure 5.20 – Childcare used by ‘full working households’ by age of children and working patterns of parents

(a) Dene two-parent 'full working households' (N=83)

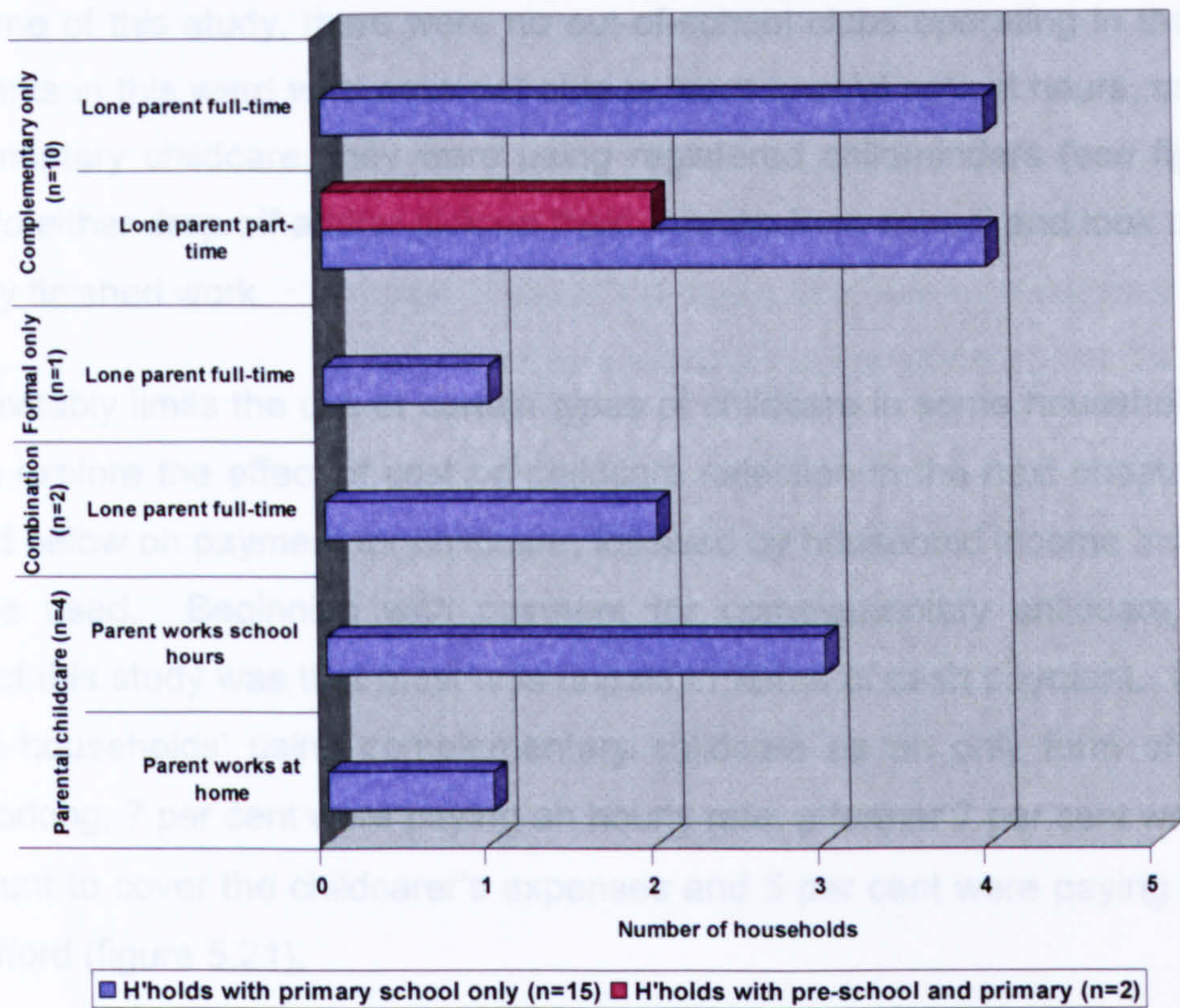


(b) Walker two-parent 'full working households' (N=36)

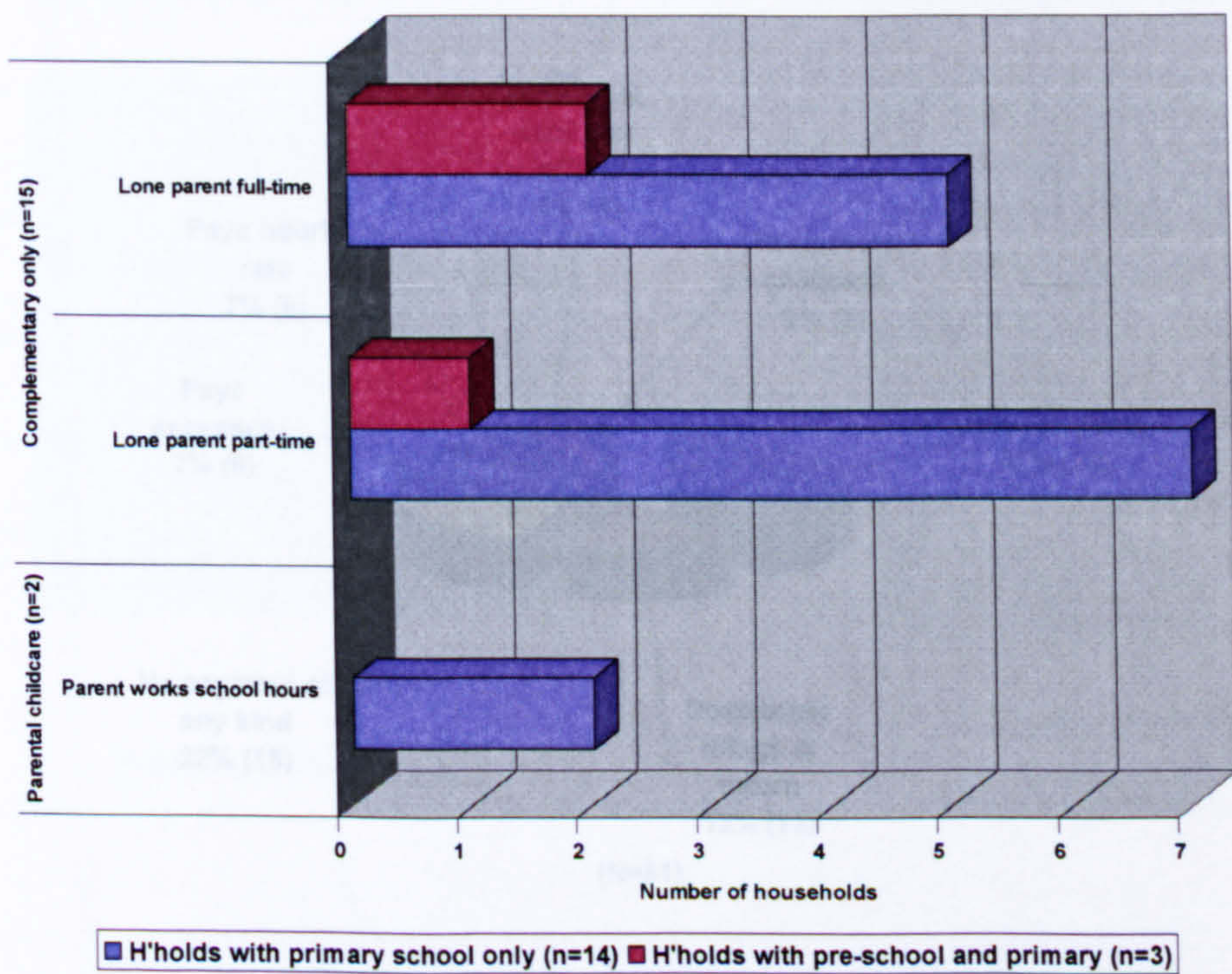




(c) Dene lone parent 'full working households'  
(N=17)



(d) Walker lone parent 'full working households'  
(N=17)

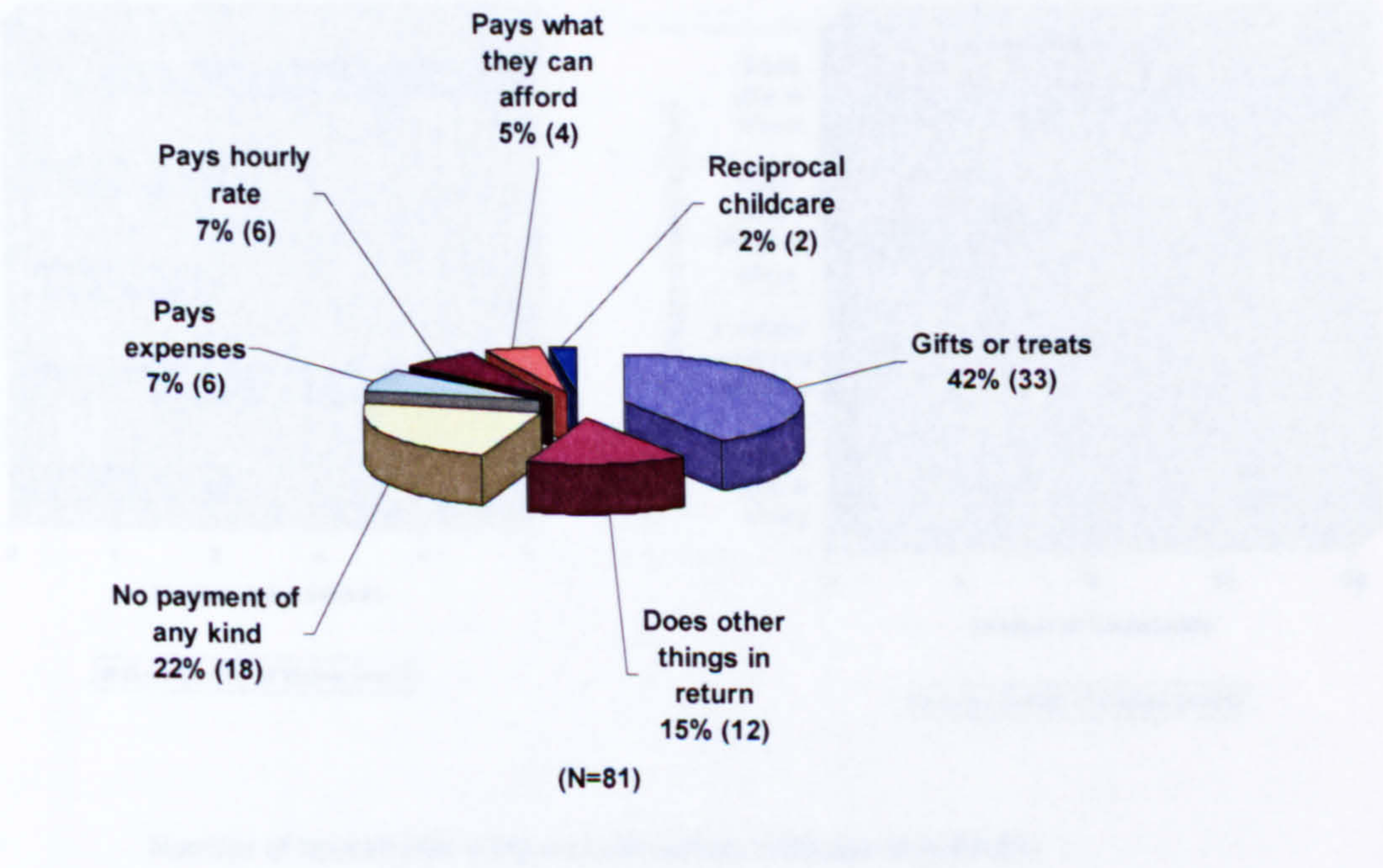




Almost all of the households using formal childcare were using it as ‘wrap-around’ care for primary school children and this was particularly important in Dene ward, as, at the time of this study, there were no out-of-school clubs operating in that ward<sup>37</sup>. For parents in this ward who were not able to work around school hours, or rely on complementary childcare, they were using registered childminders (see figure 5.19 above) to either drop off and/or pick up their children from school and look after them until they finished work.

Cost inevitably limits the use of certain types of childcare in some households and in order to explore the effect of cost on childcare selection in the next chapter, data is provided below on payment for childcare, followed by household income in relation to childcare used. Beginning with payment for complementary childcare, a major finding of this study was that most was unpaid in terms of cash payment. Of the ‘full working households’ using complementary childcare as an only form of childcare while working, 7 per cent were paying an hourly rate, a further 7 per cent were paying an amount to cover the childcarer’s expenses and 5 per cent were paying what they could afford (figure 5.21).

**Figure 5.21 – Payment for complementary childcare  
‘Full working households’ using complementary childcare only**



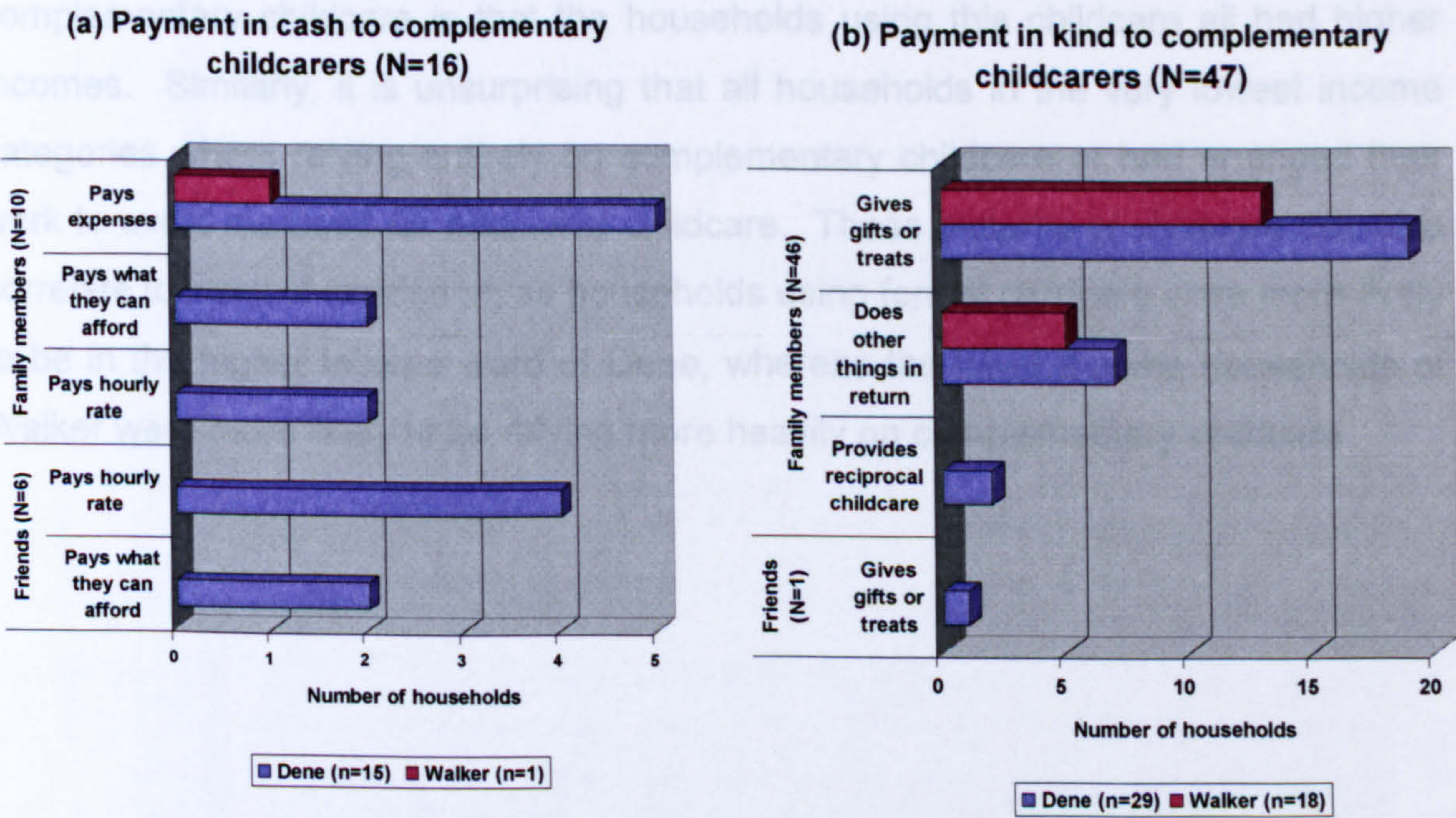
<sup>37</sup> This study formed an important part of a wider consultation process with local residents in the Dene ward about childcare needs and as a gap in provision was identified, out-of-school clubs are now operating in that ward.



However, working parents were trying to find other ways to repay complementary childcarers through gifts (42%) or doing other things in return such as shopping or odd jobs around the house (15%). Other studies have also confirmed the unpaid nature of complementary childcare and they have found similar forms of ‘payment in kind’ (LaValle et al. 1999) (Wheelock and Jones 2002) (Meltzer 1994). In this study, parents commented in open questions that these small gestures helped to relieve the guilt they felt by asking for regular childcare support and this recurring theme of guilt because of ‘putting onto’ family or friends is explored in the following chapters.

When payment for complementary childcare is explored further by ward, it becomes clear that almost all the households paying cash for childcare were in Dene ward, with only one household in Walker paying an amount to cover a family member’s expenses (figure 5.22a). More households in Walker were paying ‘in kind’ than paying in cash (figure 5.22b). However, overall Dene households were more likely to be repaying complementary childcarers in some way.

Figure 5.22 – Payment to complementary childcarers  
‘Full working households’



Number of households using complementary childcare only (N=81)

<sup>28</sup> Exact costs for formal childcare were not obtained during the survey. The cost information presented here was obtained by contacting local childminders and day nurseries directly.  
See below for use of formal childcare in households with at least one non-working parent for further details of subsidies out of school provision.



There were 19 households in the study (all in Dene) using a registered childminder, five of which had pre-school and primary school children. In these households, the parents were paying for full days of childcare for the pre-school children at an average cost of £22-28 per day<sup>38</sup> and after school care at either a set 'after school' fee of £7.50 per session or between £2.50-£3.50 per hour. The remaining 14 households using a registered childminder were paying for after school care only. There was one household in Dene using a private day nursery two full days per week at an average cost per day of £38-42 and one household using a workplace crèche three mornings per week at an average rate of £10.50 per session. There was also one household in Walker using an after school club four evenings a week. At the time of study, some out-of-school provision in the disadvantaged ward of Walker was free of charge or parents were paying reduced fees because of government subsidies<sup>39</sup>. The reduced rate for working parents using after school care was £3.80 per session.

Looking at the cost of childcare in terms of ability to pay, turns the analysis to levels of income in relation to childcare used. Figure 5.23 (a) and (b) shows the distribution of childcare use by income categories for both wards. What is immediately apparent when looking at the use of formal childcare, either alone or in combination with complementary childcare is that the households using this childcare all had higher incomes. Similarly, it is unsurprising that all households in the very lowest income categories were relying entirely on complementary childcare or had arranged their work to avoid the need for additional childcare. These patterns of childcare use also correlate to ward of residence, as households using formal childcare were more likely to be in the higher income ward of Dene, whereas the lower income households of Walker were more likely to be relying more heavily on complementary childcare.

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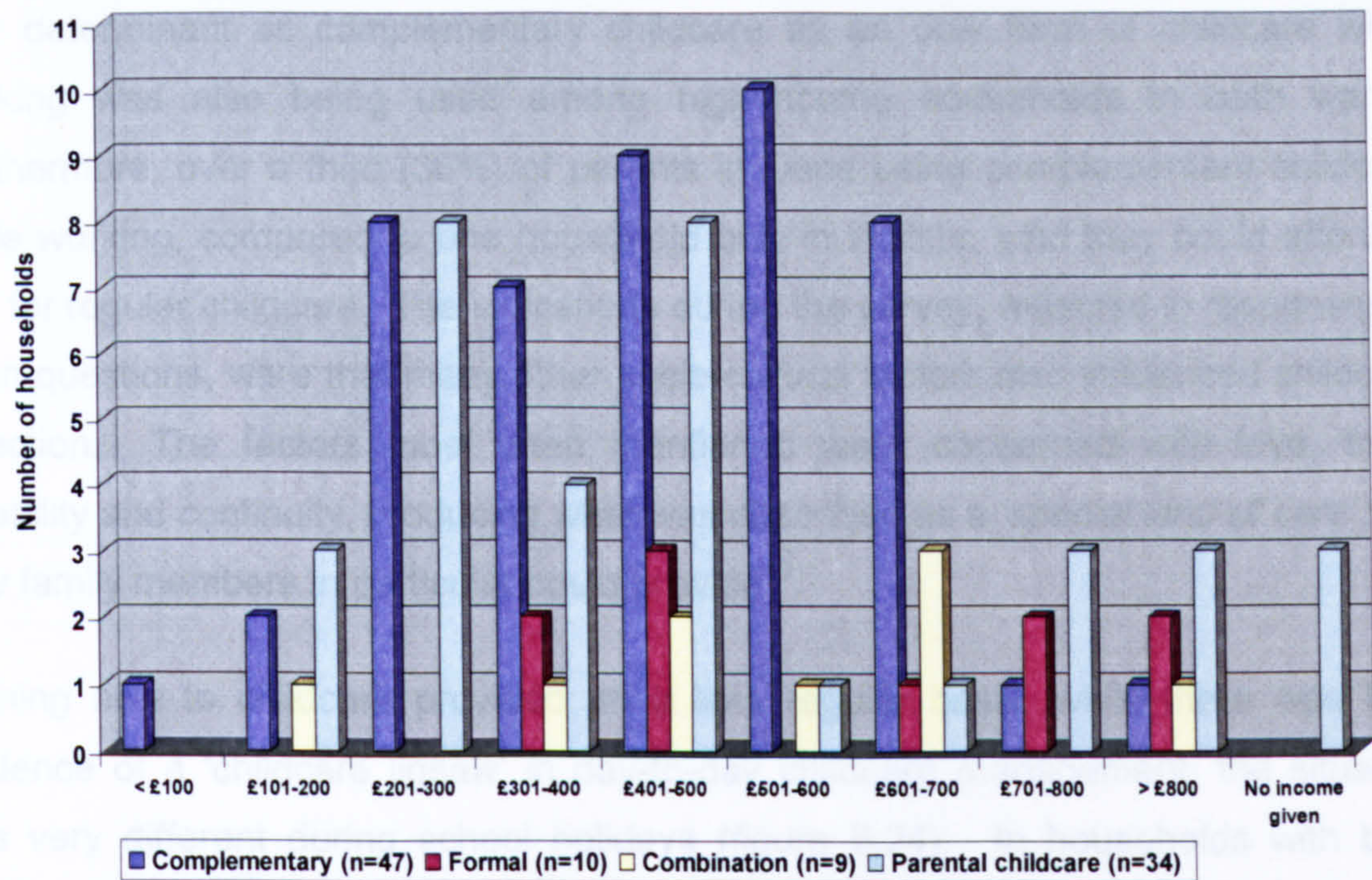
<sup>38</sup> Exact costs for formal childcare were not obtained during the survey. The cost information presented here was obtained by contacting local childminders and day nurseries directly.

<sup>39</sup> See below for use of formal childcare in households with at least one non-working parent for further details of subsidised out of school provision.

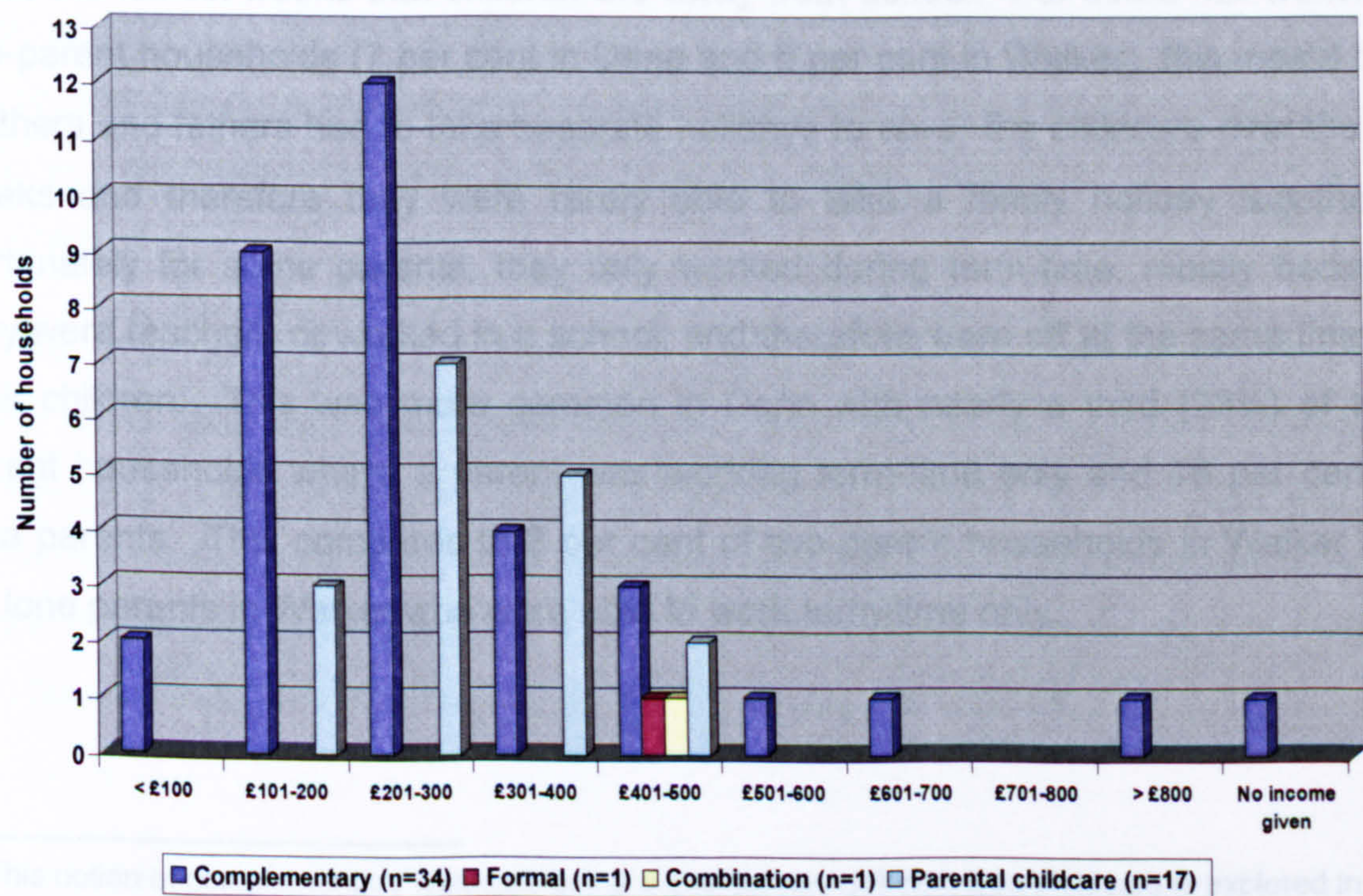


Figure 5.23 – Childcare used by level of income  
'Full working households'

(a) Dene 'full working households' (N=100)



(b) Walker 'full working households' (N=53)





The link between socio-economic status (social class and income levels) and the use of childcare has also been demonstrated in other studies (LaValle et al. 1999) (Duncan and Edwards 1999), and while acknowledging an association between levels of income and use of complementary and/or formal childcare, this provides only a partial explanation. The data from this study suggests that cost was not the only determinant as complementary childcare as an only form of childcare while working was also being used among high-income households in both wards. Furthermore, over a third (36%) of parents in Dene using complementary childcare while working, compared to one household only in Walker, said they could afford to pay for regular childcare. The indications during the survey, reflected in responses to open questions, were that many other socio-cultural factors also influenced childcare selection. The factors most often mentioned were concerned with love, trust, reliability and continuity, producing what was described as a '*special kind of care*' that only family members in particular could provide<sup>40</sup>.

Turning now to childcare provided on a less regular basis, while there was little evidence of a 'childcare jigsaw' in day-to-day childcare management, the situation was very different during school holidays (figure 5.24). In households with both parents or a lone parent in paid work, school holidays were a particular challenge and this was a topic which parents brought up in the open comments section of the survey when they described school holidays as a '*childcare nightmare*'. Most parents were able to take some time off during the school holidays but not enough time to cover the full six weeks that children are away from school. For some 'full working', two-parent households (7 per cent in Dene and 6 per cent in Walker), this meant that mothers and fathers had to take separate holidays to cover the childcare over the six weeks and therefore they were rarely able to take a family holiday together<sup>41</sup>. Fortunately for some parents, they only worked during term-time, mostly because they were teachers or worked in a school, and therefore were off at the same time as their children. This was more common in Dene with nearly a third (23%) of two-parent households where a parent was working term-time only and 18 per cent of lone parents. This compares to 8 per cent of two-parent households in Walker and no lone parents in Walker who were able to work term-time only.

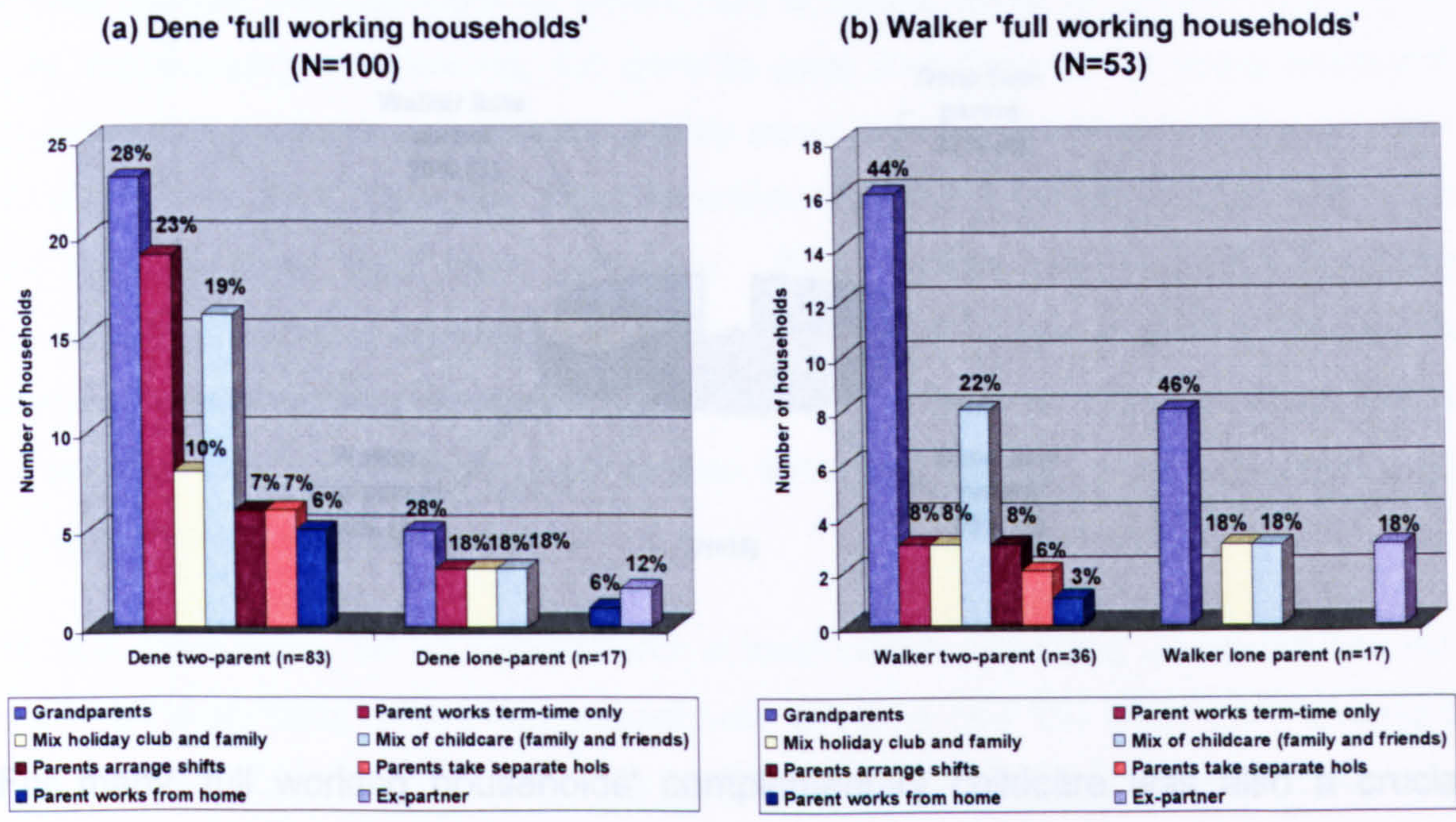
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<sup>40</sup> This notion of complementary childcare being a qualitatively different type childcare is explored in the following chapters.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 7 for an example in the case studies of a family who had not had a holiday together since their children were born.



Figure 5.24 – Childcare arrangements during school holidays – ‘Full working households’ in Dene and Walker



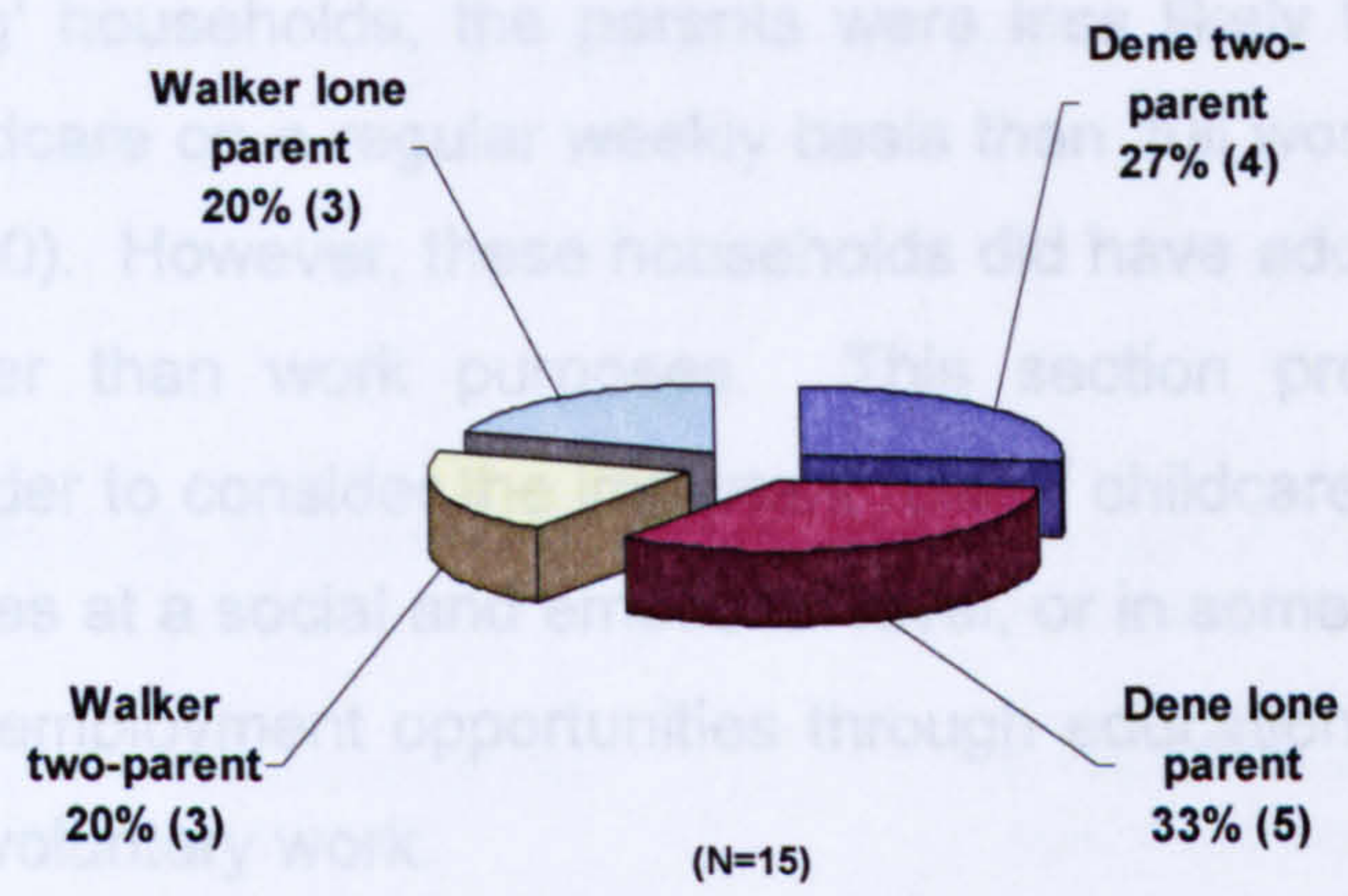
Other parents relied heavily on family members, especially grandparents, to help during school holidays and there was evidence of a very complicated ‘childcare jigsaw’ (Wheelock and Jones 2002), as parents said it was often necessary to have different family members *‘chipping in a week here or there’*. This contrasts with the day-to-day childcare being used during school time in this study where most parents were able to rely on one childcarer or one form of childcare. This supports the suggestion that once children are in full-time school parents are able to simplify their childcare arrangements until school holidays when they have to find full-time childcare.

So far, this section had focused on childcare for work purposes, however respondents were also asked about childcare used in the wider context of household provisioning and social well-being. There were 10 per cent of ‘full working households’ who were using complementary childcare on a regular, weekly basis for social reasons such as going out with a partner or friends or taking part in hobbies and figure 5.25 shows which households were using this childcare<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> It is interesting that so few ‘full working households’ were relying on complementary childcare for social reasons. This is explored in the following chapters using qualitative data to explain the feelings of parents who rely on complementary childcare for work purposes and therefore feel unable to ask for childcare to allow them to go out with friends or their partner.

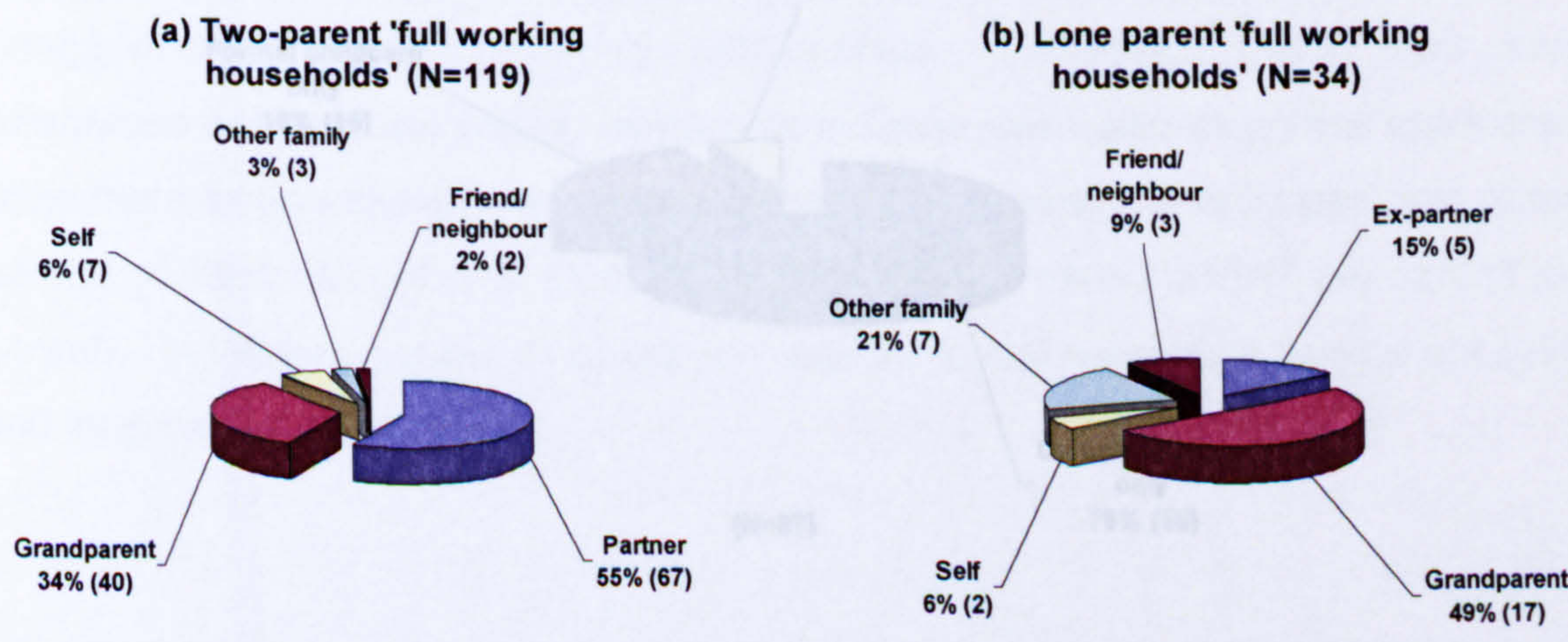


**Figure 5.25 – ‘Full working households’ using complementary childcare for social reasons**



For many ‘full working households’ complementary childcare was also a crucial support during times of parental ill health, especially in lone parent households. In most two-parent households, when a parent was sick a partner could be relied upon to care for the children and this was the case in over half (55%) of the ‘full working households’, although a further third (34%) said they would turn to grandparents for help (figure 5.26a). However, in lone parent households where there was no resident partner, grandparents (49%) and other family members (21 per cent) were providing the vital support needed when lone parents were ill, contributing to their general social well-being by ensuring that their children were cared for (figure 5.26b).

**Figure 5.26 – Childcare used when parents are sick – ‘Full working households’**



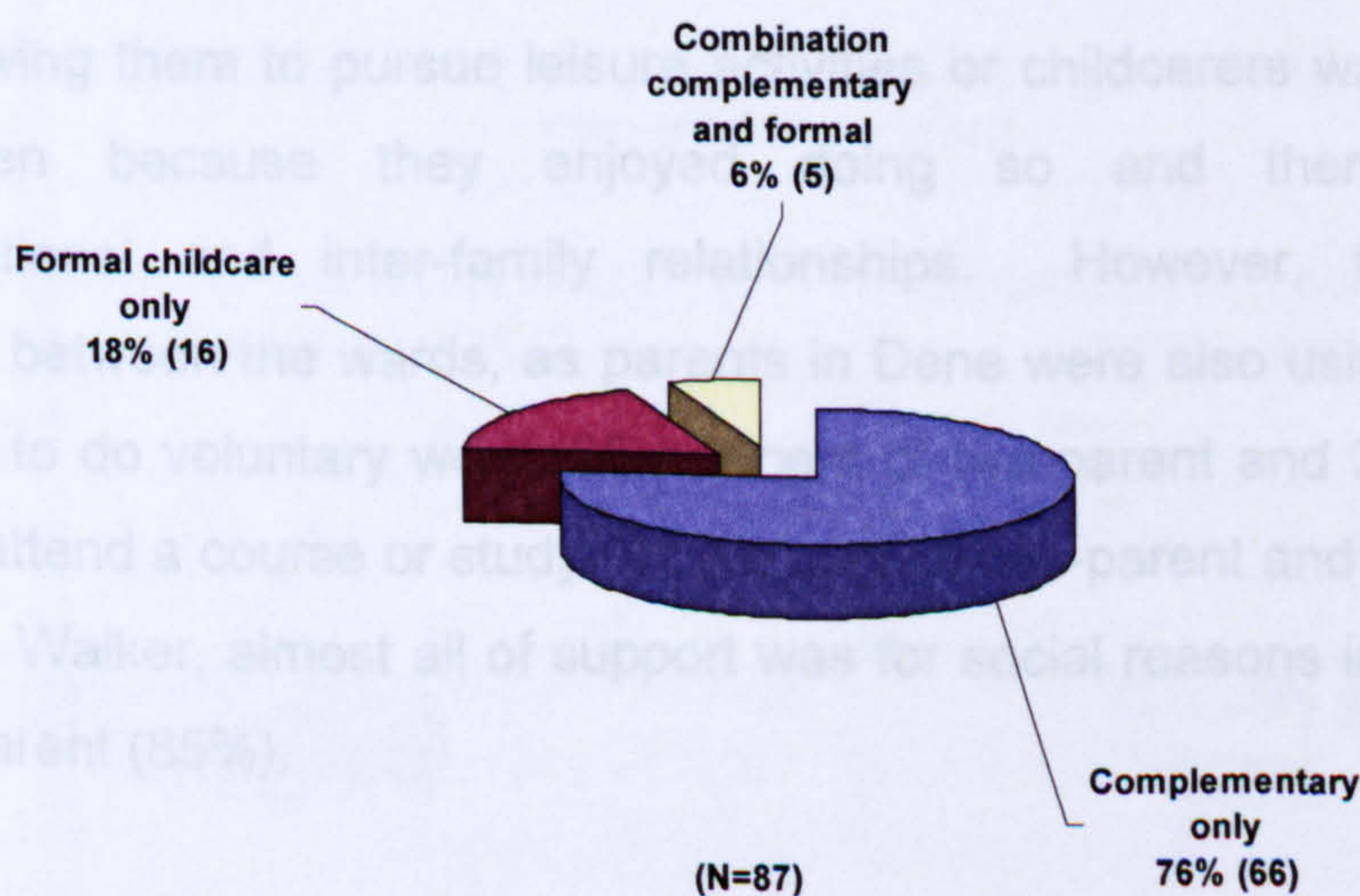


Beginning by exploring the use of complementary childcare in detail, there were 71  
**Households with at least one non-working parent**

Where at least one non-working parent was at home, either in ‘partially working’ or fully ‘non-working’ households, the parents were less likely to be using additional, non-parental childcare on a regular weekly basis than ‘full working households’ ( $X^2 = 13.03 (1), p=0.000$ ). However, these households did have additional childcare needs for reasons other than work purposes. This section provides data for these households in order to consider the important role of childcare in helping households sustain themselves at a social and emotional level, or in some cases to allow parents to improve their employment opportunities through education or provide community support through voluntary work.

In total, there were 166 households with at least one non-working parent (68 ‘partially working households’ where one parent was at home and the other parent worked, and 98 fully ‘non-working households’). Of these households, over half (52%) were using some childcare on a regular weekly basis, and while the vast majority of this was complementary childcare alone (76%), these households were also using formal childcare either alone (18%) or in combination with complementary childcare (6%) (figure 5.27).

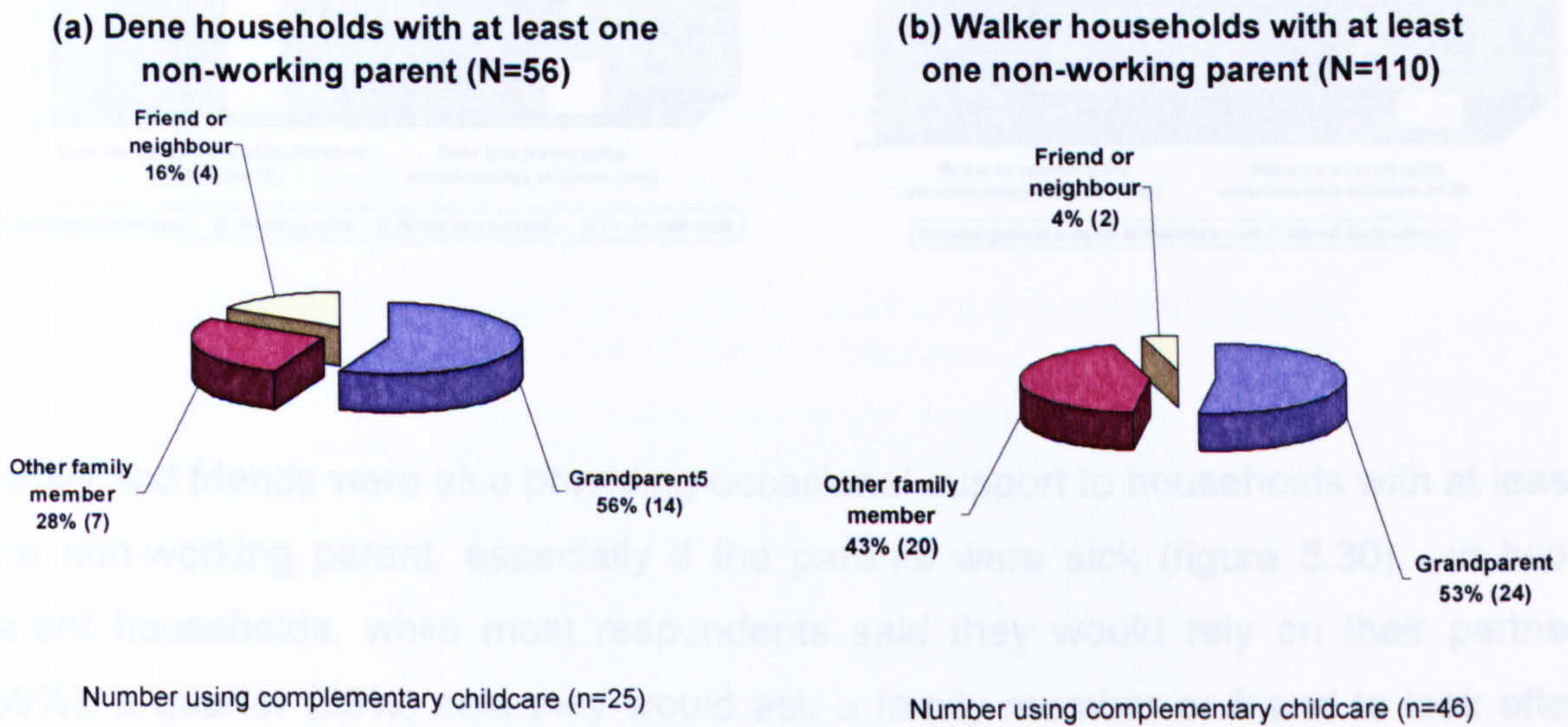
**Figure 5.27 – Households with at least one non-working parent use of childcare**





Beginning by exploring the use of complementary childcare in detail, there were 71 households using this childcare alone or in combination on a regular weekly basis (25 households in Dene and 46 in Walker). Figure 5.28 shows who was providing the childcare and once again, grandparents emerge as the main childcarers (56% in Dene 53% in Walker).

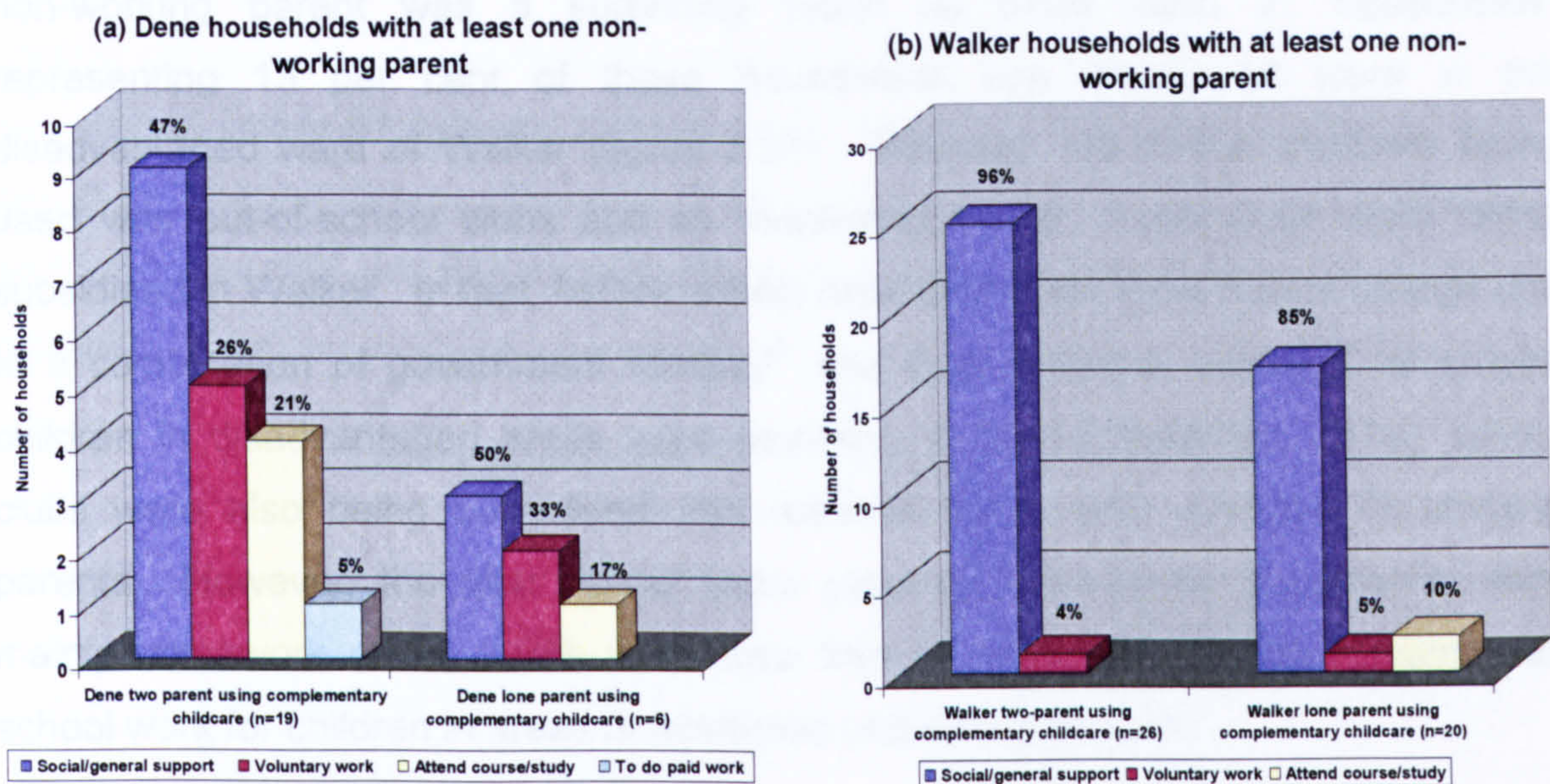
**Figure 5.28- Households with at least one non-working parent  
Use of complementary childcare**



By looking at the reasons these households were using this childcare then the nature of the support being provided by family and friends becomes more apparent. These were centred around social reasons (figure 5.29), which included giving parents a break, allowing them to pursue leisure activities or childcarers wanting to look after the children because they enjoyed doing so and therefore maintaining intergenerational and inter-family relationships. However, there were some differences between the wards, as parents in Dene were also using this childcare to allow them to do voluntary work (26 per cent of two-parent and 33 per cent of lone parent) or attend a course or study (21 per cent of two-parent and 17 per cent of lone parent). In Walker, almost all of support was for social reasons in two-parent (96%) and lone parent (85%).

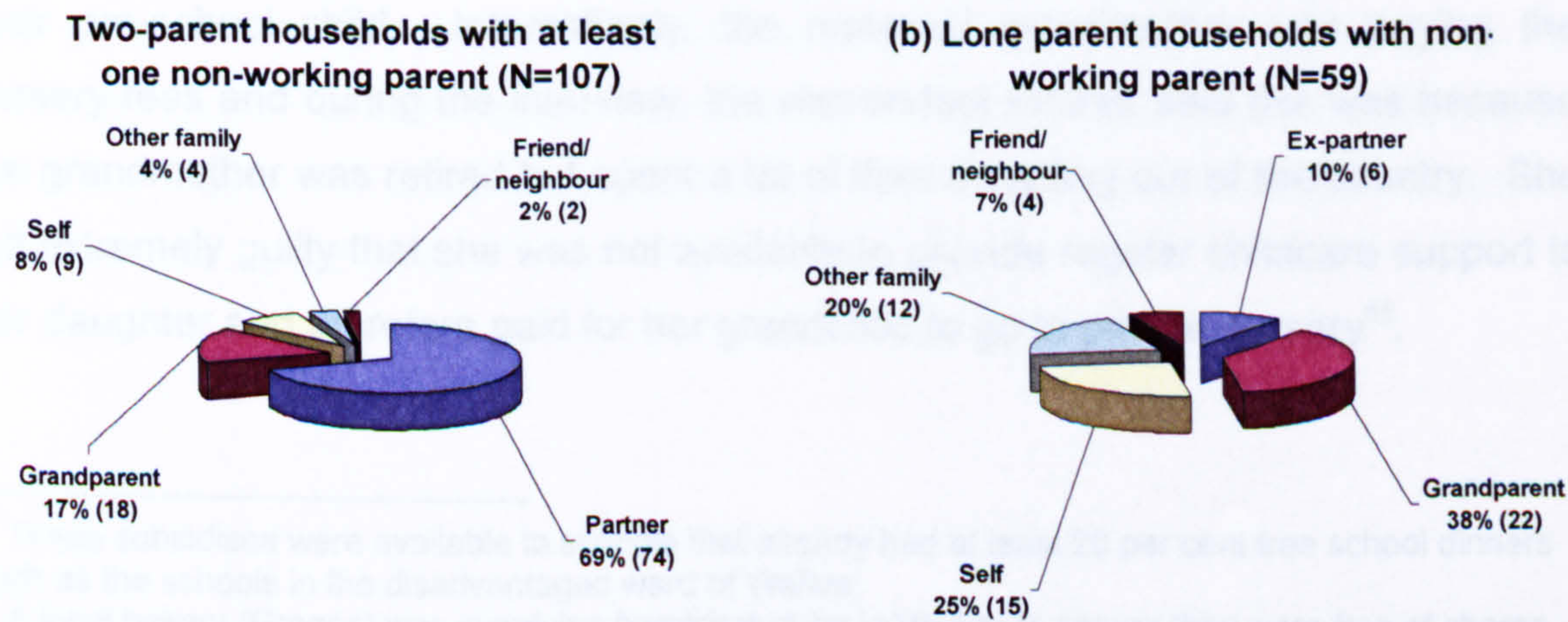


**Figure 5.29 – Households with at least one non-working parent  
Reasons for using complementary childcare**



Family and friends were also providing occasional support to households with at least one non-working parent, especially if the parents were sick (figure 5.30). In two-parent households, while most respondents said they would rely on their partner (69%), a quarter (23%) said they would ask a family member or friend to look after the children. However, almost two-thirds (65%) of lone parents said they would ask a family member or friend and this again highlights how much lone parents rely on complementary childcare as a vital support to promote social well-being.

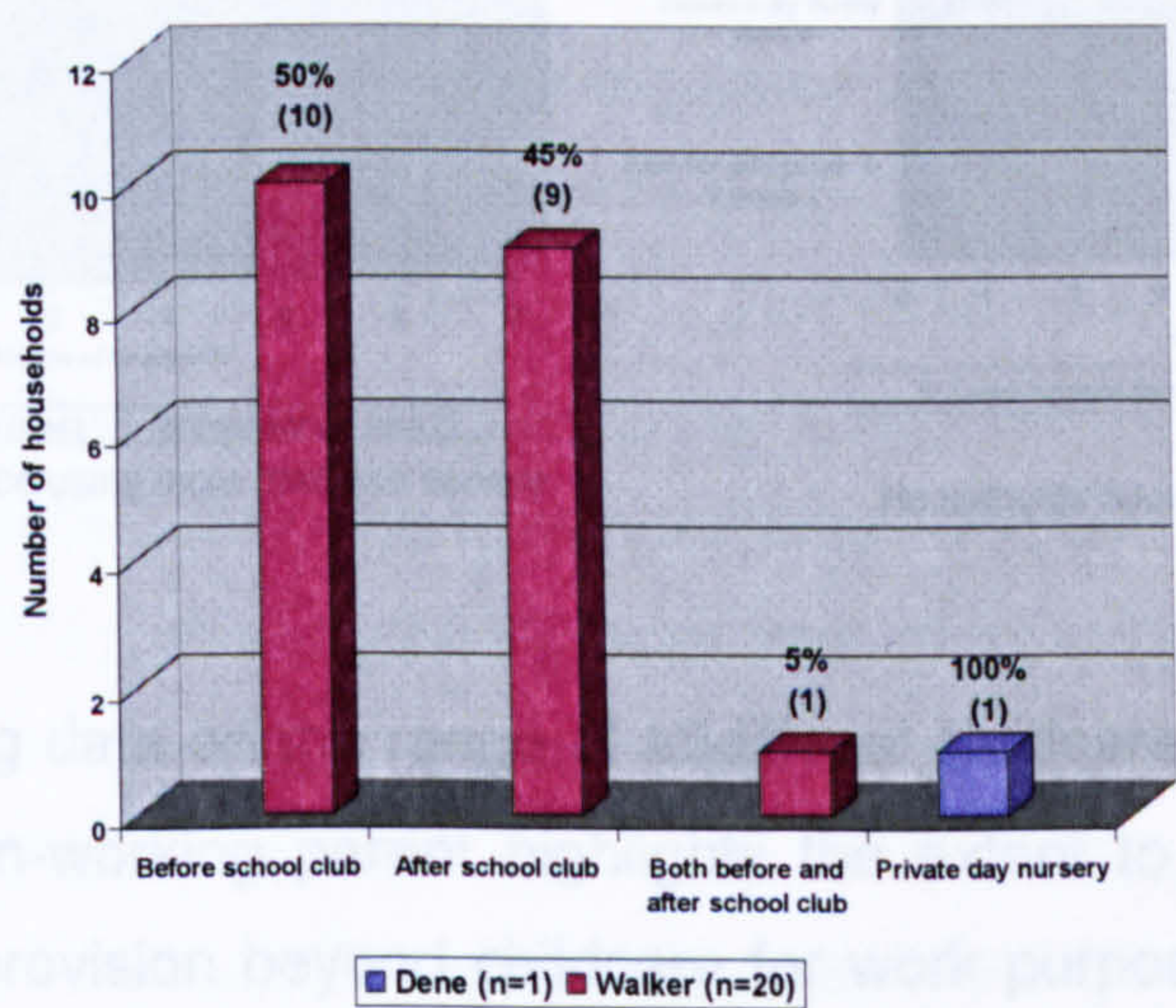
**Figure 5.30 – Childcare used when parents are sick – Households with at least one non-working parent**





The use of formal childcare on a regular weekly basis in households with at least one non-working parent was a surprising result as there were 21 households, representing 13 per cent of these households and almost all were in the disadvantaged ward of Walker (figure 5.31). However, the formal childcare being used was out-of-school clubs and as mentioned earlier, these clubs were being subsidised in Walker. In fact, before school breakfast clubs were free of charge due to a combination of government funding<sup>43</sup> and local business support<sup>44</sup> to ensure children in disadvantaged areas were receiving a decent breakfast. After school clubs were also being subsidised and reduced rates were available to working parents. However, the after school clubs used by non-working households were mainly homework clubs, which were also free of charge to provide support with school work for children in areas of academic underachievement.

**Figure 5.31 – Households with at least one non-working parent  
Use of formal childcare**



The one household in Dene ward using formal childcare had a non-working mother and working father and they used a private day nursery a few mornings a week for their pre-school child. Interestingly, the maternal grandmother was paying the nursery fees and during the interview, the respondent mother said this was because the grandmother was retired but spent a lot of time travelling out of the country. She felt extremely guilty that she was not available to provide regular childcare support to her daughter and therefore paid for her grandchild to go to private nursery<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> These subsidises were available to schools that already had at least 20 per cent free school dinners such as the schools in the disadvantaged ward of Walker.

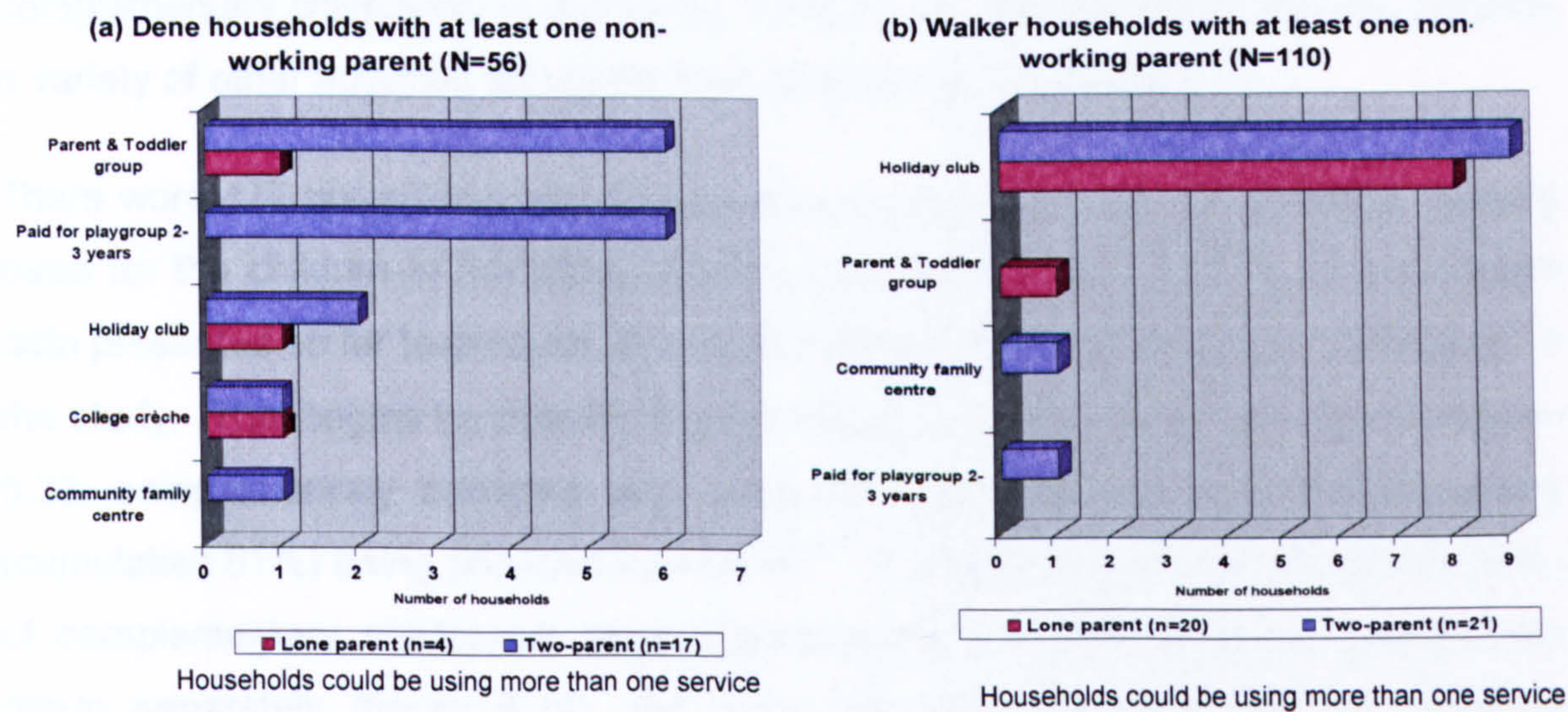
<sup>44</sup> A local bakery (Greggs) was supplying breakfast clubs in Walker to ensure they were free of charge.

<sup>45</sup> This provides some insight into the level of obligation grandparents feel in offering help with the care of their grandchildren which often conflicts with their own desire to enjoy their retirement. This theme will be explored in the following chapters.



Households with at least one non-working parent were also using a range of other services for their children on a regular, weekly basis such as parent and toddler groups, playgroups and community family centres (figure 5.32), many of which had to be paid for. In the playgroups, parents could pay to leave children aged 2 to 3 years for up to 2 hours, as was the case in the family centre crèches<sup>46</sup>. The playgroups and crèches were not being used as childcare for work purposes but for social reasons.

**Figure 5.32 - Households with at least one non-working parent use of childcare related services**



In summary, providing data on the range of additional childcare used by households with at least one non-working parent highlights the extent to which parents need support with caring provision beyond childcare for work purposes. Complementary childcare is particularly important in this wider context of household provisioning, especially for lone parents who rely heavily on family or friends to help in emergencies or in times of ill health. As an important step in recognising the vital role of complementary childcare to both working and non-working households, the following section acknowledges those who provide complementary childcare by providing insight into their other commitments and constraints to demonstrate the value of their contribution.

<sup>46</sup> Playgroups and crèches such as these are not classified as formal childcare and as long as children are not left for more than 2 hours, the facility does not have to be registered although they do have to be safety and police checked.



## Who are complementary childcarers?

To understand the nature of complementary childcare we need to know more about those who provide this vital support, mainly at no cost, to both working and non-working parents. As so few childcare studies had obtained detailed information about this group of childcarers, little was known about their other commitments and activities. This had led to a general misconception in the UK among policymakers in particular, that those providing regular childcare support, especially grandparents, are at home 'with time on their hands' and therefore readily available to fill the gap in childcare provision. Contrary to this image, when looking more closely at the lives of complementary childcarers in this study, it becomes clear that some are also juggling a variety of other activities alongside their childcare commitments.

There were 177 complementary childcarers providing childcare on a regular, weekly basis for the children in this study and the purpose of this section is to consolidate data presented so far to produce an overall profile of all complementary childcarers in the study. This begins by considering demographic data and, as illustrated in figure 5.33, complementary childcare was extremely gendered with over three-quarters (cumulative 81%) being provided by women<sup>47</sup>. Furthermore, almost two-thirds (64%) of complementary childcarers were grandparents and looking at the grandparent group separately (figure 5.34), the most common childcarer was the maternal grandmother alone (55%). While grandparents were also caring for children together (21%), it was interesting that so many respondents commented that in these situations, the grandmother carried out most of the childcare, reinforcing the gendered nature of the childcare<sup>48</sup>. In the few cases where grandfathers were caring for the children on their own (7%), this was usually because they had taken over childcare responsibilities from the grandmother because she was no longer able because of ill health or in some cases because she had passed away. Therefore, the traditional gender roles had been maintained initially, and the change was prompted by force of circumstances, supporting findings from other studies that traditional roles are often renegotiated in times of adversity (Wheelock 1990).

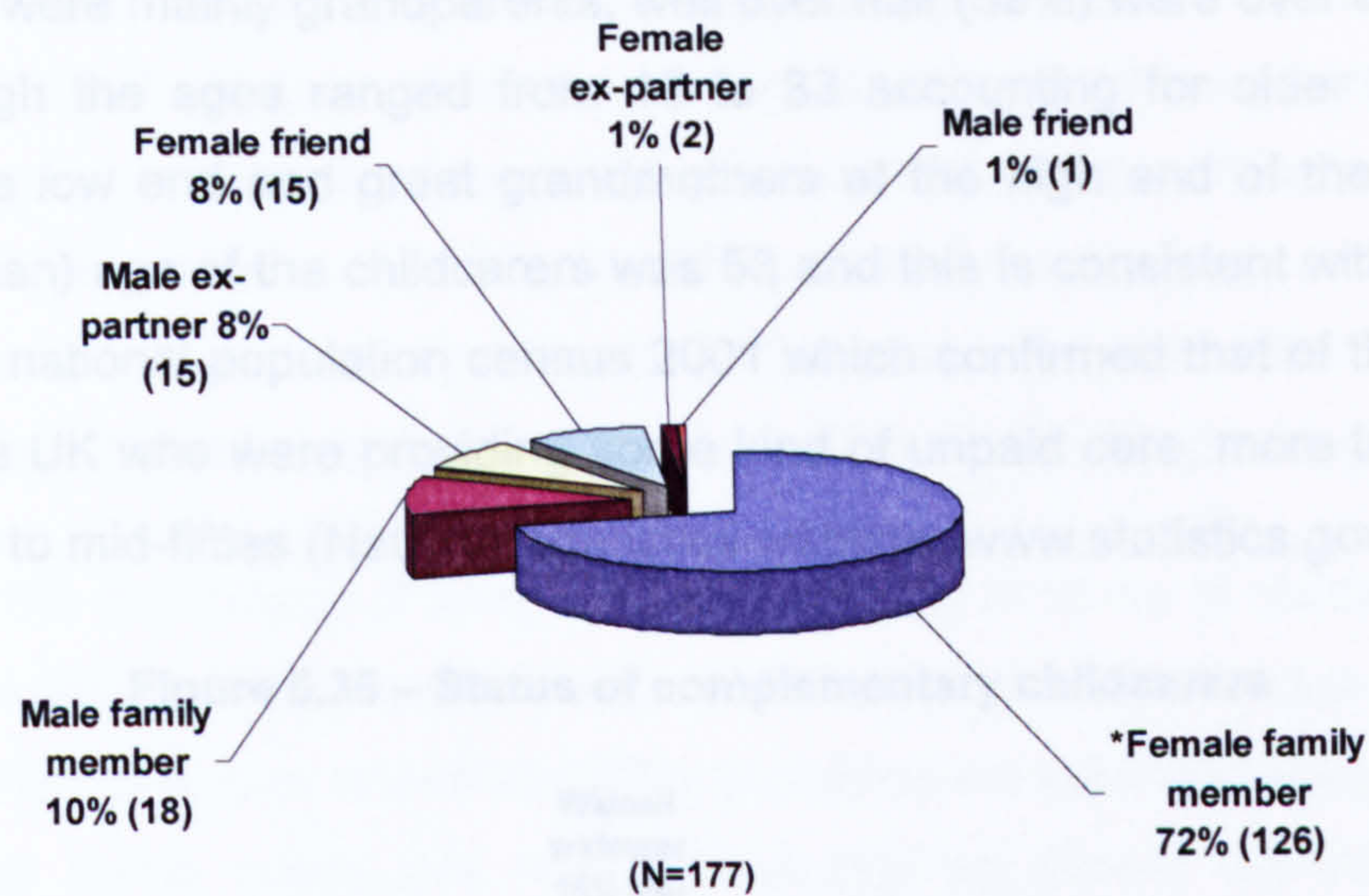
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<sup>47</sup> This finding was expected as discussed in Chapter 2, care in general, and childcare in particular, is still considered to be 'women's work' (Graham 1983) (Ungerson 1983) (Gardiner 1997) (Folbre 1994).

<sup>48</sup> It is for this reason that grandparents together were placed in the female family member category in figure 5.34.

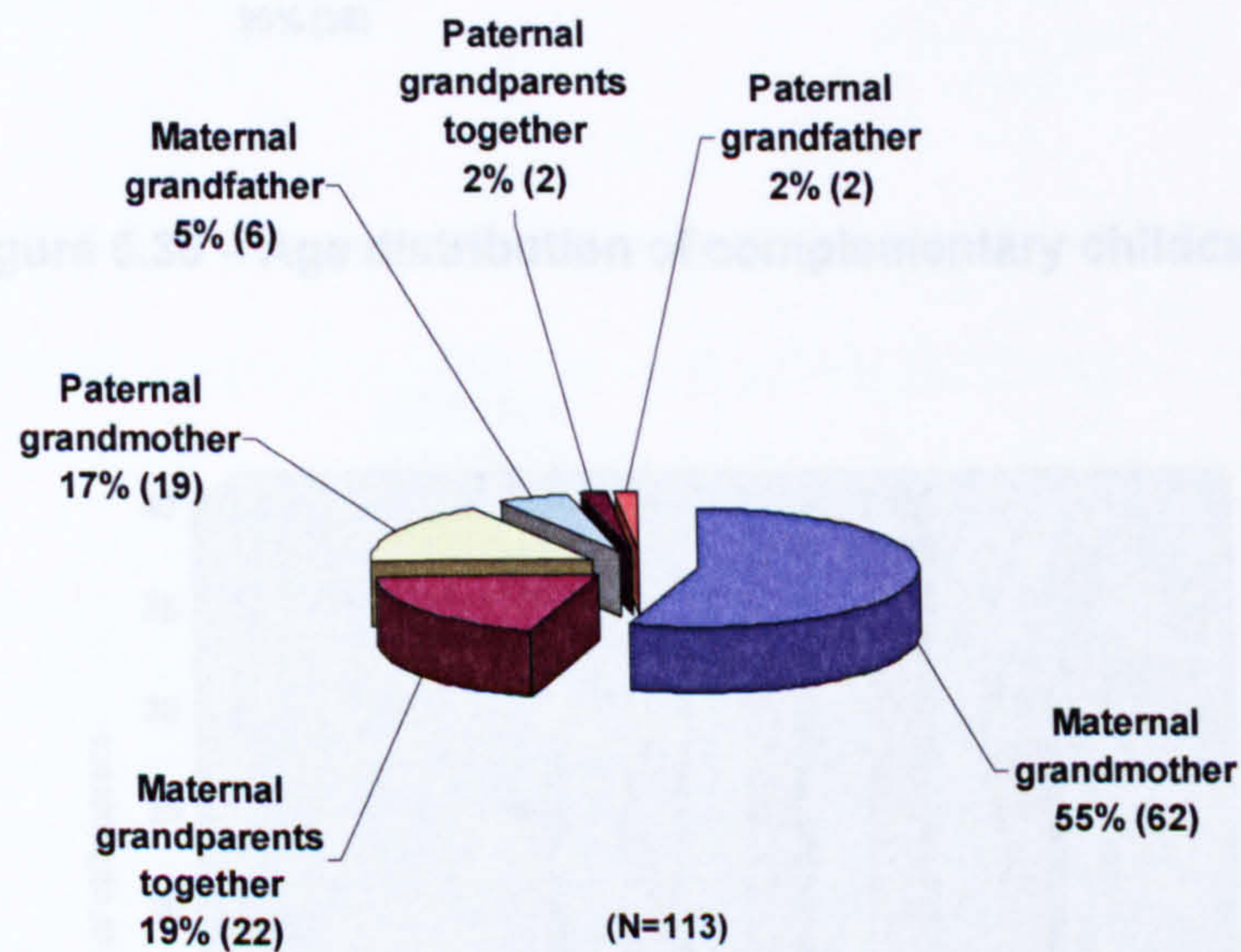


Figure 5.33 – Sex of complementary childcarers



\*This category includes households where grandparents were said to care for children together as it was the grandmother who was the main childcarer

Figure 5.34 – All grandparents providing complementary childcare





Over half (55%) of the childcarers were married or living with a partner (figure 5.35) and, as they were mainly grandparents, well over half (59%) were over age 50 (figure 5.36) although the ages ranged from 15 to 83 accounting for older brothers and sisters at the low end and great grandmothers at the high end of the range. The average (mean) age of the childcarers was 53 and this is consistent with the findings from the UK national population census 2001 which confirmed that of the one-in-five people in the UK who were providing some kind of unpaid care, more than half were in their early to mid-fifties (National Statistics website: [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) 2001).

Figure 5.35 – Status of complementary childcarers

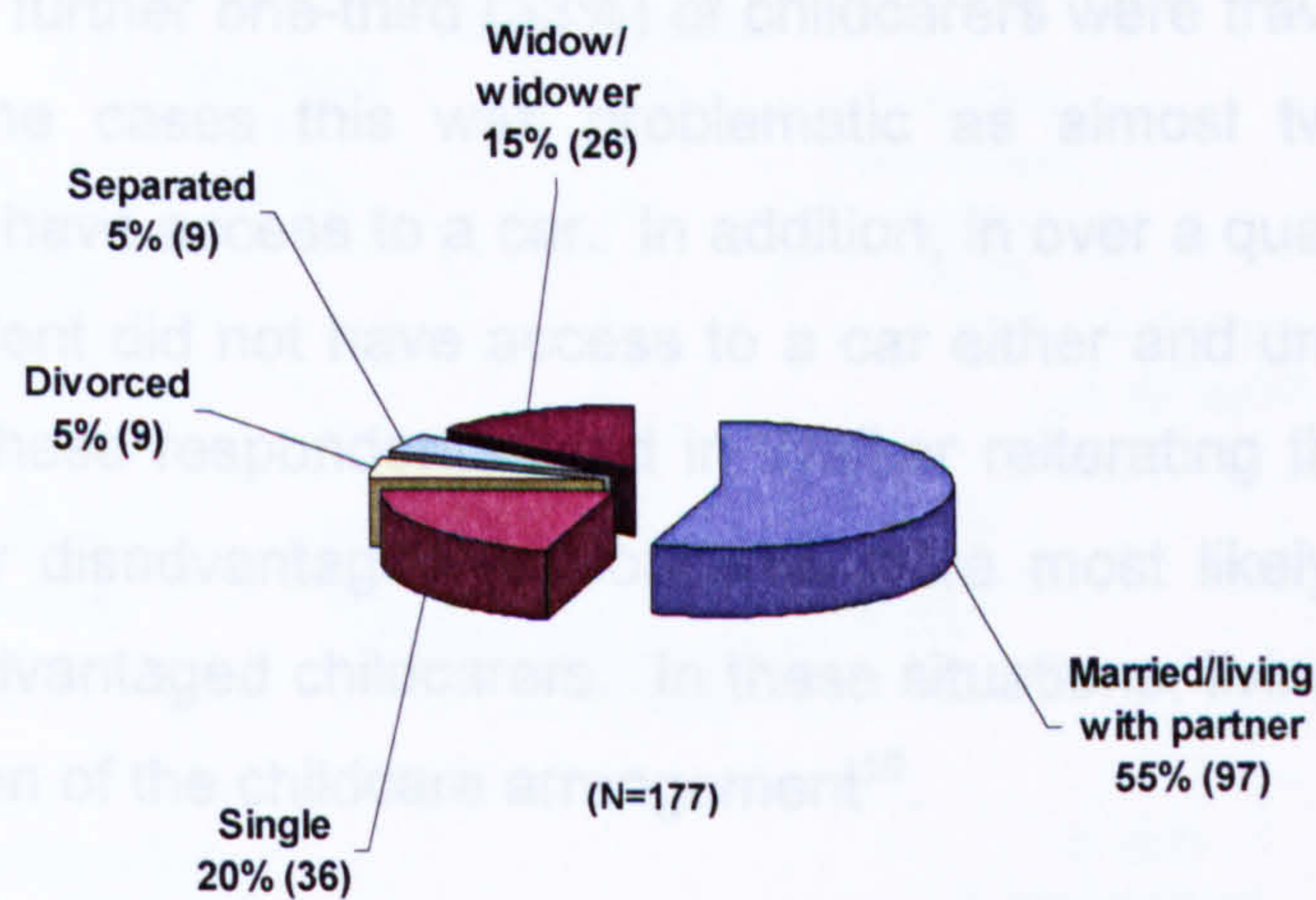
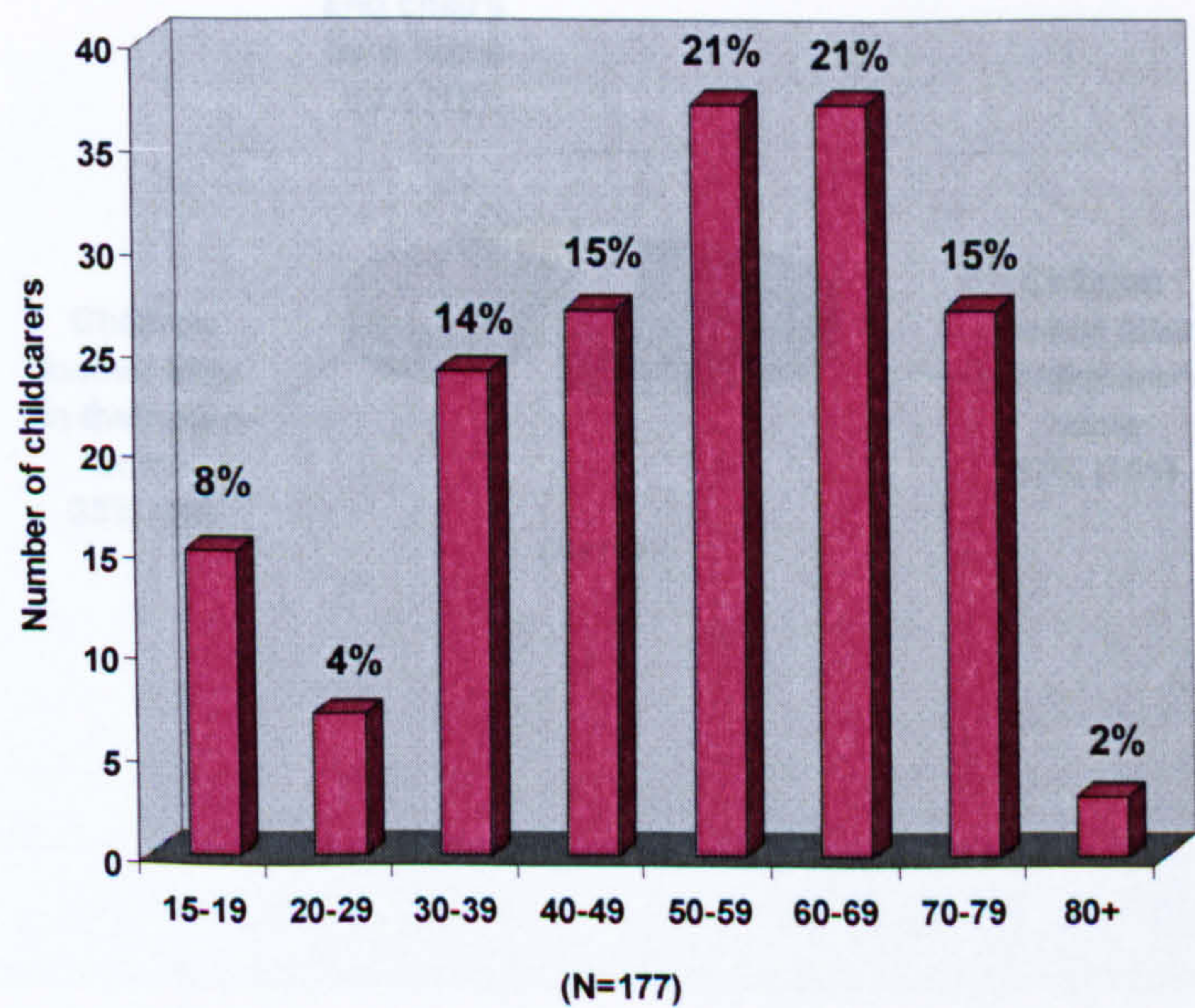


Figure 5.36 – Age distribution of complementary childcarers



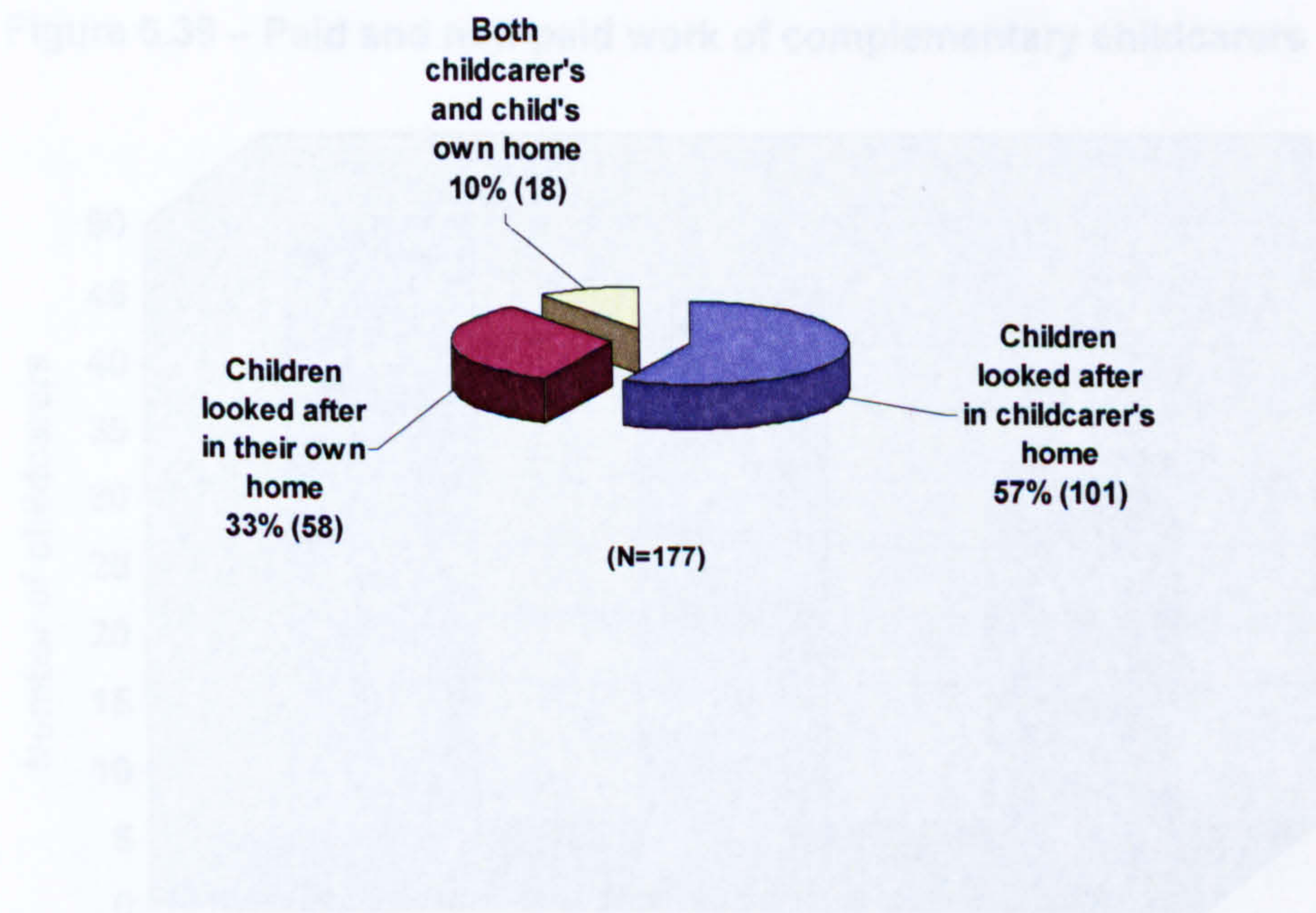


Almost all (92%) of the childcarers lived no further than 5 miles away from the parents they were supporting and in two-thirds (64%) of cases they lived within one mile (this included 7 per cent where the grandparent lived in the same house). While the exact ward of residence of the childcarer was not obtained<sup>49</sup>, as so many lived within very close proximity, it is likely that they shared similar living conditions to the respondents. This is particularly relevant in Walker ward where childcarers providing support to parents would also be socially and economically disadvantaged.

Figure 5.37 – Paid and unpaid work of complementary childcarers

Considering the importance of living in close proximity in terms of childcare, over half (57%) of the children were being looked after in the childcarer's own home (figure 5.37). However, a further one-third (33%) of childcarers were travelling to the child's home and in some cases this was problematic as almost two-thirds (64%) of childcarers did not have access to a car. In addition, in over a quarter (28%) of these cases the respondent did not have access to a car either and unsurprisingly, three-quarter (78%) of these respondents lived in Walker reiterating the point made that socio-economically disadvantaged respondents were most likely relying on socio-economically disadvantaged childcarers. In these situations, living in close proximity was a vital condition of the childcare arrangement<sup>50</sup>.

Figure 5.37 – Where childcarers were looking after the children



<sup>49</sup> It was felt that it would be too difficult to obtain accurate information about childcarer's ward of residence as many people are unsure about city ward boundaries. It is for this reason that there are no ward of residence comparisons made for childcarers.

<sup>50</sup> Transport for childcarers will be discussed in later chapters with a specific example from one of the case study households which demonstrates the additional physical and financial hardship of travelling to and from childcare.



Turning to the other activities of childcarers, as shown in figure 5.38, the largest proportion (37%) of complementary childcarers were retired. However, a quarter (25%) were in paid employment either as an employee or self-employed with working hours ranging from 3 to 65 with an average (mean) of 31 hours. In addition, some complementary childcarers were involved in other unpaid work on a regular weekly basis such as voluntary work and caring for other people (other than the children in the study). Figure 5.39 shows the hours of paid and unpaid work highlighting the other commitments of complementary childcarers.

Figure 5.38– Employment status of complementary childcarer

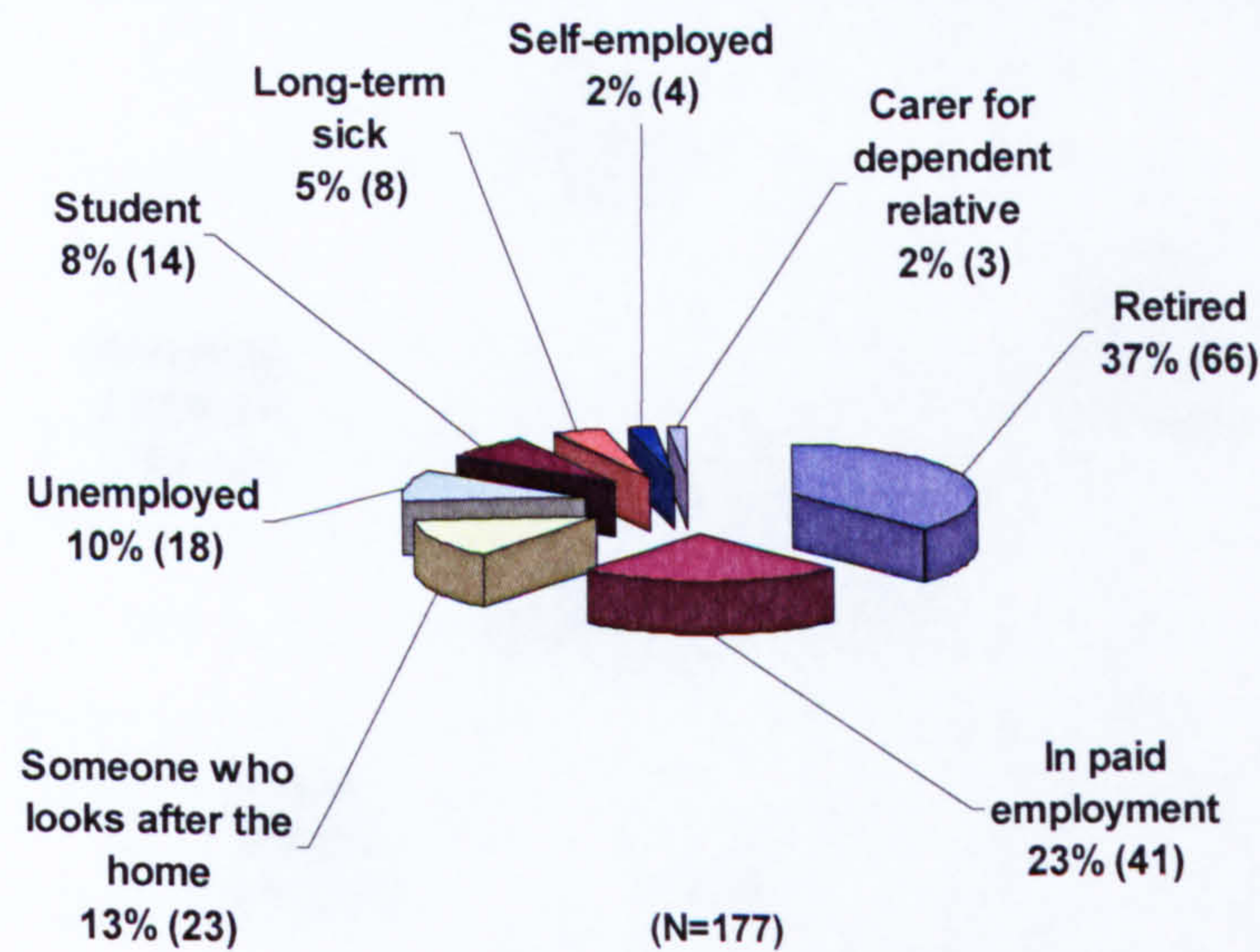
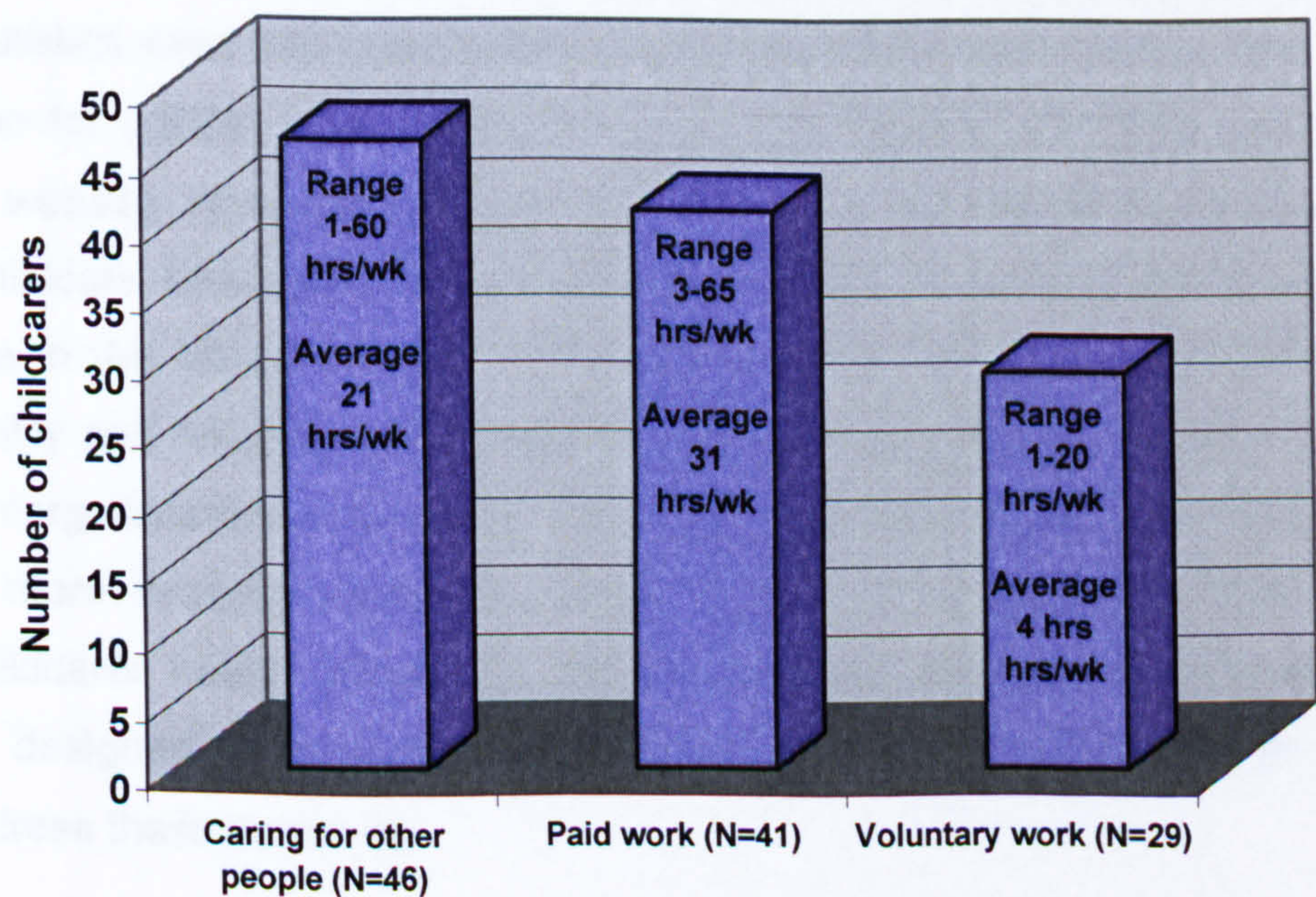


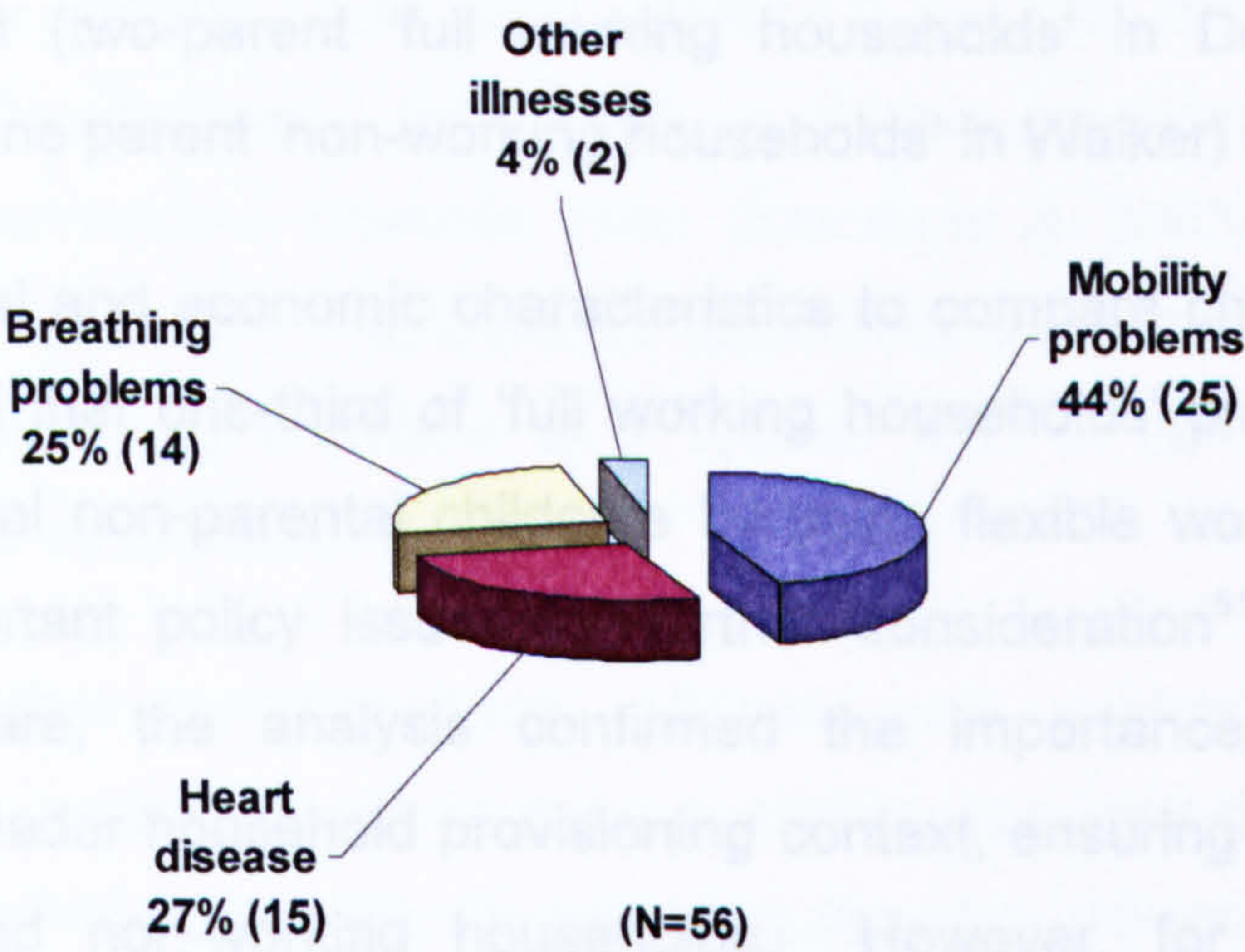
Figure 5.39 – Paid and non-paid work of complementary childcarers





Almost a third (32%) of the complementary childcarers had some kind of reported disability or health problem most of which were illnesses generally associated with older age (figure 5.40). The majority (44%) were mobility or walking related (eg. arthritis or spondylosis), and once again this reinforces the importance of close living proximity or good transportation. There were also just over a quarter (27%) who had heart related illnesses such as angina, high blood pressure and heart disease, while breathing problems such as asthma or emphysema accounted for a further quarter (25%) of all health problems.

**Figure 5.40– Reported health problems of complementary childcarers**



These statistics were not unexpected as national data now confirms that it is not uncommon for unpaid carers to be in poor health because of their age (National Statistics website: [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) 2001). The poor health of those providing regular childcare, who continue to support the formal economy by allowing parents to participate in the labour market, is both an important policy issue in terms of the sustainability and reliability of this type of childcare, and a social issue in relation to general intergenerational well-being. The qualitative data presented in later chapters allows a more in-depth exploration of this issue, with examples of how concerns about childcarer health affects the ‘family childcare relationship’ and how policy solutions designed to recognise and support older family childcarers in particular could address these concerns.



## Conclusions

The main purpose of this chapter has been to present a statistical analysis of patterns of childcare used by a representative sample of households in two wards of Newcastle upon Tyne and to provide much needed information about the family, friends and neighbours supporting parents with childcare on a regular, weekly basis. To enable this analysis to be placed in the appropriate context, data produced from the childcare survey was used to provide a full description of household and livelihood characteristics to allow the reader to build up a picture of social and economic living circumstances of parents and children in the study households. This data confirmed the stark contrast between the wards and made it possible to identify the most affluent (two-parent 'full working households' in Dene) and the most disadvantaged (lone parent 'non-working households' in Walker) families.

Using these social and economic characteristics to compare childcare patterns, the analysis revealed that one-third of 'full working households' preferred to avoid the need for additional non-parental childcare by using flexible working arrangements, highlighting important policy issues for further consideration<sup>51</sup>. For those using additional childcare, the analysis confirmed the importance of complementary childcare in a broader household provisioning context, ensuring social well-being for both working and non-working households. However, for many 'full working households' complementary childcare was a vital resource to allow them to sustain their livelihoods. The data confirmed that parents in this study who required childcare for work purposes were four times more likely to be using complementary childcare provided by family, friends or neighbours than formal childcare such as day nurseries, registered childminders and out-of-school clubs.

Despite the high levels of complementary childcare overall, there were differences in childcare use between the wards. Employing socio-economic characteristics as indicators for social class the analysis confirmed that of the relatively small number of households using formal childcare for work purposes almost all of these were two-parent households located in the middle class ward of Dene. On the other hand, lone parents in the lower social class of Walker were especially reliant on complementary childcare while working.

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<sup>51</sup> See the following chapters for further discussion.



These results were unsurprising suggesting a strong connection between household income and childcare costs whereby only the higher earners were in a position to pay for formal childcare provision. However, the connection between household income and the use of complementary childcare was not straightforward casting doubt over assumptions that childcare selection is always economically driven. As a key finding from the study was that complementary childcare was largely unpaid childcare (see also (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999) (Wheelock and Jones 2002)), it was expected that the lowest earners would be relying on this childcare to allow them to work as paying for childcare would not have been a viable option. However, the analysis showed high use of complementary childcare in some of the highest income households where parents could have afforded to pay for formal childcare. This suggests other non-monetary factors were taking precedence over economic considerations (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003)<sup>52</sup>, something which was also apparent from the respondent's comments to open questions when they described complementary childcare as a special '*kind of care*' offering emotional 'closeness' as well as physical care.

The implication that complementary childcare was qualitatively different, and therefore seen by some parents as more desirable than formal childcare provision, was highly dependent on the person providing the care (Himmelweit 2000). In the vast majority of cases in this study, this person was a family member establishing 'family childcare' as a main conceptual direction for further analysis. Furthermore, within the 'family childcare' group it was also possible to verify the huge contribution of grandparents, therefore providing further evidence of the 'army of grandparents' supporting families to enable them to sustain their livelihoods. However, this provision is not without its problems and one of the main advantages of this survey, that other childcare studies have been unable to address, was that by producing crucial data about complementary childcarers it has been possible to identify the social and economic constraints they face.

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<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of 'gendered moral rationalities' in childcare selection and the following chapters for examples from this study.



Issues of ill health and situations where grandparents were themselves juggling complementary childcare with other activities such as paid work, voluntary work and care of other family members have been highlighted, raising some important questions about the well-being of 'over-stretched' grandparents. At a policy level, this also has implications for the management and planning of childcare provision in the short and long term, calling into question the sustainability of complementary childcare provided by grandparents which is allowing so many parents to go out to work and on which the formal economy in the UK is so dependent.

In summary, while the survey produced extremely useful statistical data about childcare patterns, highlighting the role of complementary childcare in supporting families living in a variety of social and economic circumstances, data produced in this way can only go so far in providing reasons and explanations for why parents were relying so heavily on complementary childcare. To understand this more fully requires an in-depth exploration of complex social relationships and socio-cultural factors underpinning childcare preferences and behaviour using methods more sensitive to social context and the subjective experience (Mason 1996). Therefore, the following chapters take the themes identified from the survey and attempt to provide some of the answers to these outstanding questions by letting the study participants speak for themselves. Using mainly qualitative data from focus groups with mothers and interviews with parents and complementary childcarers (grandparents), alongside further quantitative data from the childcare survey, factors influencing childcare selection are explored. The main focus is on how economic decisions must be viewed in the social context of the extended 'household'. It also explores how the social and economic consequences faced by grandparents may be causing some dissent in the ranks of the 'army of grandparents'. Combining this with an analysis of important issues from a parental perspective in terms of guilt and indebtedness, provides the basis for consideration of the less positive aspects of complementary childcare, which in its current unsupported and unrecognised form, has the potential to place unreasonable strain on family relationships leading to tension and conflict.



## Chapter 6: How parents select their childcare

How parents decide who should look after their children cannot be understood without an appreciation of the complex interrelationship of a number of social as well as economic and political factors which influence childcare selection. In the previous chapter, childcare behaviour was described in terms of tangible structural constraints (or opportunities) parents face such as two-parent or lone parent status, household income and area of residence. These factors helped to define some elements of the 'objective social space' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996) occupied by families in the study households. The aim in this chapter is to provide a more thorough exploration of childcare selection through an analysis of the socio-cultural factors which shape the subjective experience of parents when choosing what they consider 'appropriate' childcare. It is this analysis that provides more insight into why parents were using particular types of childcare and why complementary childcare was felt to be so important.

The analysis also considers childcare selection in the context of the sociological agency versus structure debate by exploring the interaction between 'active choice' guided by preferences and 'force of circumstances' as a result of social and institutionalised structural constraints. This is especially important in the disadvantaged ward of Walker as at first glance it appears that working parents on very low incomes would have no other option but to rely on 'free' complementary childcare. However, there were also indications of a strong culture of 'family childcare' in that ward reinforced by a particular lack of confidence and mistrust in formal childcare<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the childcare survey highlighted situations of 'active choice' in Dene ward where some of the highest income working households were using complementary childcare. These situations illustrate the importance of investigating more thoroughly the extent to which seemingly economic decisions about childcare are embedded in the social institution of the household (Granovetter 1985) where social, economic and political aspects of daily life come together.

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, this has serious implications for childcare policy initiatives targeted at disadvantaged areas such as the Government's Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative and the more recent Sure Start Children's Centres which are concerned with the creation of more formal childcare places in these areas.



Strong themes emerging from the survey suggested that a key socio-cultural factor influencing childcare was rooted in the theoretical proposition of the inseparability of care from the person providing it (Himmelweit 1995). In other words, the parents indicated that it mattered very much to them *who* was looking after their children and in this study the quantitative data confirmed that most parents were turning to family members, particularly grandparents, with indications that childcare provided by family members was seen as a qualitatively different, and better, type of childcare. This is yet another area for further empirical and theoretical exploration in an attempt to identify that 'extra something' parents felt family members were providing.

The data used in this chapter were produced from three sources. These include quantitative data from the childcare survey, extracts of transcripts from focus group discussions among mothers in disadvantaged areas of Newcastle and extracts from in-depth interviews with parents and grandparent complementary childcarers who were members of the case study households. These data are intended to complement each other to provide, where appropriate, statistical evidence to support exploration of important themes. The qualitative data is used to achieve a deeper, more 'rounded' understanding by allowing study participants to describe their experiences 'in their own words' (May 1993) (Rubin and Rubin 1995) (Mason 1996).

In beginning the analysis of how parents select their childcare, differences in preferences between one-to-one versus collective childcare are explored by looking at the perceived advantages and disadvantages of both types of childcare from the perspective of parents. This leads to a further investigation of factors which shape preferences for *who* parents think should look after their children and *what* this care should provide. This in turn leads to an analysis of *why* so many parents in this study preferred to 'keep it in the family', while also considering the problems associated with 'family childcare'. In particular, this latter analysis focuses on concerns from parents about the social and economic consequences to grandparents who provide regular, weekly childcare. Considering ways to recognise and possibly financially reward family childcare is also explored in this chapter by including data from the childcare survey of parents' views about paying family members, while also presenting the position of parents and grandparents in the case study households about whether or not family members should be paid.



However, before moving on to discuss the selection of non-parental childcare, it is important to explore the key role of childcare in influencing the initial decision parents make about whether or not to (re)enter the labour market in the first place. During this process, decisions about work and childcare are decidedly interconnected in terms of financial factors where affordability of formal childcare may prevent the uptake of paid work, or socio-cultural factors where the lack of 'acceptable' childcare may be equally, if not more, influential on decisions about whether or not to leave children to go out to work. Especially when these factors are considered alongside ideologically constructed notions of motherhood and strong views about the nature of care and what it should provide, then the extent of the constraints parents (mothers) face when trying to combine paid work with childcare become more apparent. Therefore, while acknowledging the difficulty in separating decisions about who should look after the children from decisions about paid work, the following section looks specifically at how parents felt about returning to work, the impact of childcare on paid work and at parental preferences for childcare self-sufficiency through family friendly policies.

## Work and childcare

As women continue to be constructed as main carers for children<sup>2</sup> for many, especially those with young children, the decision about whether or not to (re)enter the workforce is often a difficult one. Attempts have been made to categorise women according to their status as 'primarily mother', 'primarily worker' or some integrated 'mother/worker' model (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003) (McRae 2001; McRae 2003) (Hakim 2000)<sup>3</sup>. Certainly, in this study, the importance of work to some mothers was clear and as one mother described it, "...it keeps a bit for me" [Julia, lone mother – focus group 1]. This was also supported by findings from the childcare survey, and while the majority (76%) of working mothers said the main reason they worked was to add to the family budget, as many as a quarter (24%) said the main reason was they enjoyed work. Furthermore, almost a third (31%) of non-working mothers said the main reason they would consider paid work was that they too enjoyed work and being with other adults.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the gendered nature of caring.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan and Edwards have suggested different gendered moral rationalities with 'primarily mother' (moral significance on caring for own children), 'primarily worker' (benefits of paid work as separate to identities of motherhood) and 'mother/worker integral' ('work ethic' role model is seen as part of a mothers' moral responsibility to their children. Hakim has suggested, 'work-centred', 'home-centred' and 'adaptives'. However, as Susan McRae has noted, how mothers make decisions about balancing work and family is best viewed as a continuum from wholly work-centred to wholly family-centred.



However, it was also apparent when talking to mothers that the reality for many, regardless of their work or family 'orientation', was that they faced a difficult internal struggle between their personal identities as mothers and workers (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004). This is best illustrated by Barbara's experience (lone mother from case study household 1), who described her dilemma when leaving her son to return to work. Barbara had always intended to continue working if she had children as she said she could not imagine herself staying at home full-time with a child. However, when she became a mother, her views and priorities changed and she found herself struggling to reconcile her identity as a worker, which was still very important to her, with this new aspect of her identity as a mother.

*Barbara:*

*Yes work is important to me...it gives me a sense of worth and sense of responsibility...I wanted to go back to work because I didn't want to be at home with a baby and I wasn't really into the baby thing going to someone's house for a coffee. But, I think when it came to going back to work I didn't realise it would be as bad as it was...I still felt a terrible wrench going back and I felt awful the first days.*

[Lone mother working full-time - case study household 1]

It was also clear when talking to Barbara that a strong work ethic was part of her transmitted family values (Brannen 2003)<sup>4</sup> and she felt it was important as a lone parent to provide a good role model for her young son (Backett-Milburn et al. 2001). In this respect, returning to work became part of her 'rational' decision-making and her moral responsibility as a mother (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003). However, even with her strong commitment to work located within this particular 'gendered moral rationality' she continued to be influenced and affected by societal views and expectations of motherhood which contributed to her internal conflict. This was reflected in her perceptions of a 'proper mam'.

*Barbara:*

*...when he was a baby or a lot younger you felt you were a proper mam if you were there all the time as opposed to a part-time mam one that has sort of dumped him off and then off to work and then come back.*

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<sup>4</sup> This was also apparent when talking to other members of her family in the case study household interviews – see Chapter 7.



Barbara's concern about leaving her young son and not being a 'proper mam' was connected to feelings of guilt as she thought she should have been caring for her son. These feelings were echoed by others mothers such as Mary who said she felt that when children were very young they needed their parents and no other childcare could be a real substitute.

*Mary:*

*You just need to spend time with the children when they are a certain age and they desperately need their parents and no matter what or how much money or childcare is available it's just not a substitute.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household]

However, there was a further dimension to the desire to stay home with young children. This was rooted in a deep sense of regret from the parents' perspective that they would miss out on important aspects of their children's early childhood. These feelings are expressed by Julia as she talks about her regret, and sometimes jealousy, that someone else experienced her son's early milestones and by Lisa who also felt working full-time had resulted in missed opportunities to spend time with her children.

*Julia:*

*I would have preferred longer maternity leave [Julia had had the basic statutory maternity leave which was 14 weeks when she had her child]...and if I would have been ok and if I could have survived...not spent money on anything you know...but pay for the bare minimum and bills and scraped by I would have stayed at home because I just knew I would miss out. The childminder she would say 'you know that tooth down there' and it was like no I didn't know there was a tooth down there and things like that and I knew that was going to be dead important and it was missed...he was with somebody else he wasn't with me.*

[Lone mother part-time work - focus group 1]

*Lisa:*

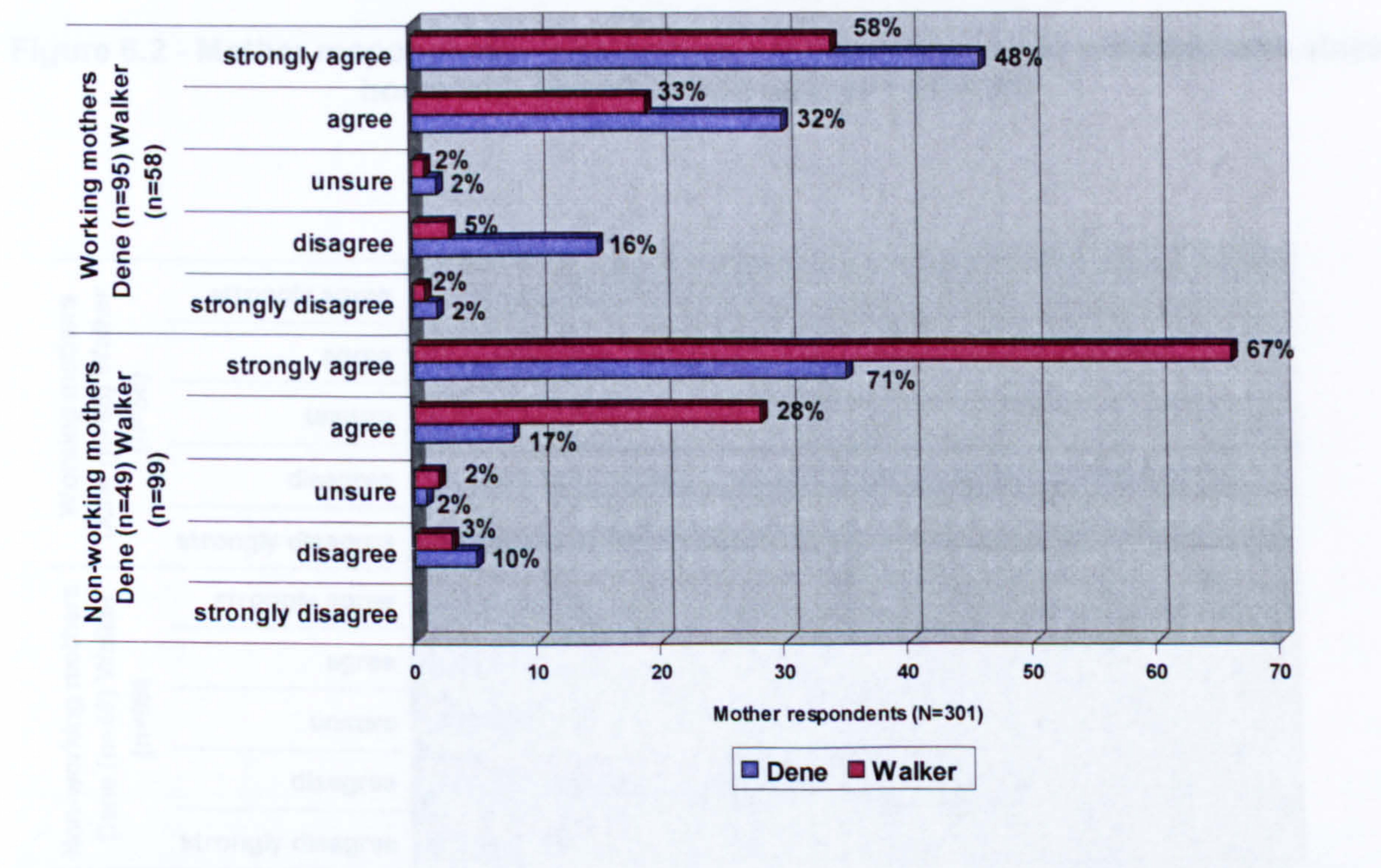
*...you missed out on a lot when they were there [at day nursery] all the time. Especially when you work full-time. It wouldn't have been as bad if I was part-time but full-time all the time you did miss a lot.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 3]



The parental preference for staying at home with very young children was indeed supported statistically through findings from the childcare survey. Figure 6.1 provides the views of all mother respondents<sup>5</sup> about whether at least one parent should stay at home with children under age one and across both wards and irrespective of whether mothers were working or non-working at the time of the study, there was extremely strong agreement for parental care in the first year of a child's life. While 12 months maternity leave has been proposed under the Government's current Ten Year Childcare Strategy by 2010<sup>6</sup>, this data suggest that this would be beneficial to parents and children as soon as possible in terms of promoting family well-being<sup>7</sup>.

**Figure 6.1 – Mother respondents - views about whether at least one parent should stay home with children aged under one year old**



<sup>5</sup> The statistical analysis in this chapter focuses on mothers' views only. Proportionally, only 6% (18) of the respondents in the survey were fathers and therefore it is difficult to compare their views with the vast majority (94%/301) of the respondents who were mothers.

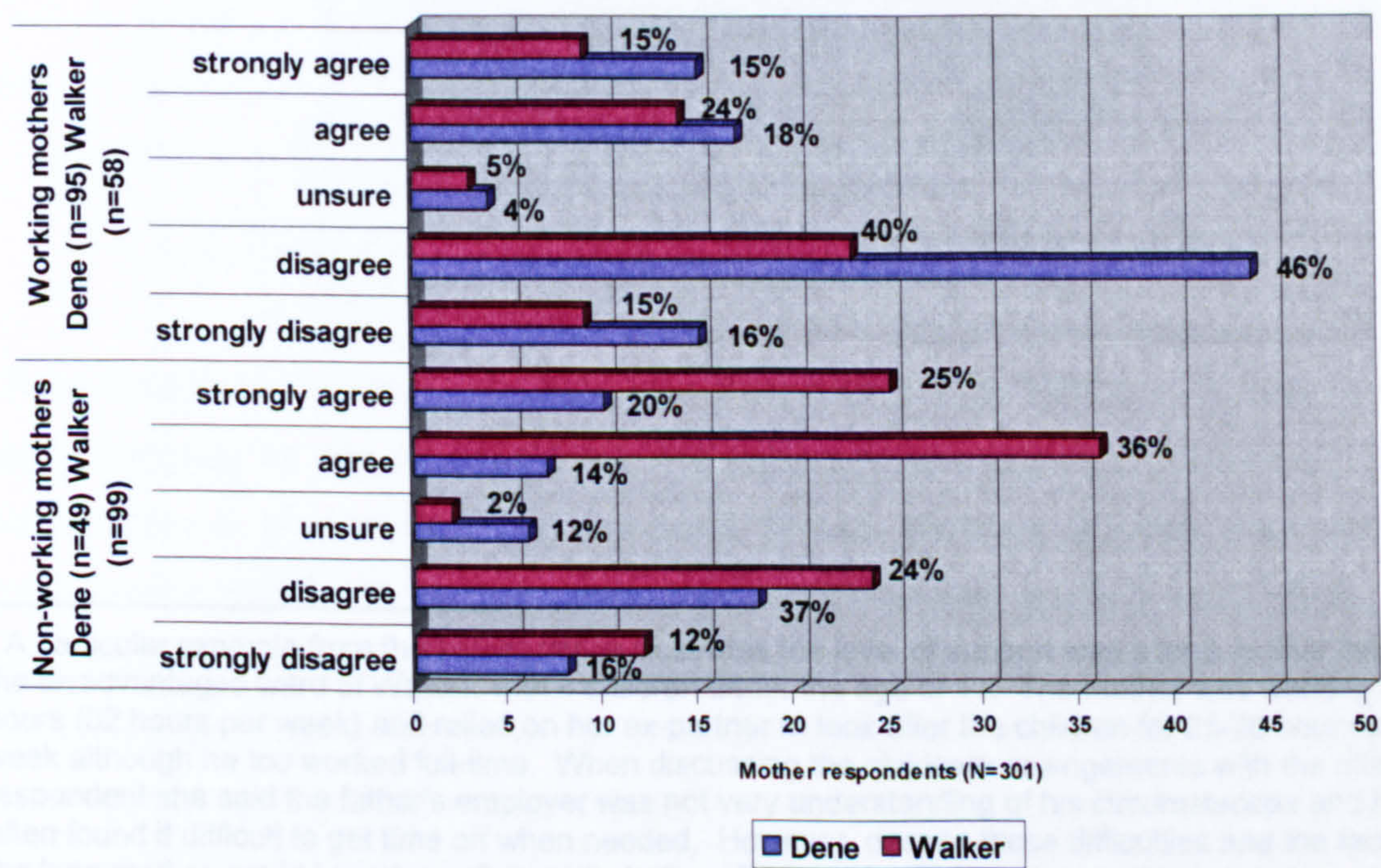
<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> As argued elsewhere, the gradual rather than immediate move from 6 months to 9 months and then eventually 12 months by 2010 ignores research that shows the benefits to the health of mothers and babies of parental leave in the first year of a child's life (Daycare Trust 2005, pp.9 note 4).



The mother respondents were also asked if they thought it was best that specifically the mother stays home with children under age one and the results imply support, at least in principle, for either parent as main carer. As shown in figure 6.2, the main differences were between working mothers where almost half in Dene (46%) and Walker (40%) disagreed with this statement compared to more traditional views among non-working mothers, especially in Walker, where a quarter (25%) strongly agreed and a further third (36%) agreed that it should be a mother who stays home. Implicitly these figures suggest support for the possibility of fathers staying at home, something which is also currently being addressed through policy proposals to allow mothers to transfer part of their extended maternity leave to fathers (H M Treasury 2004). From the mothers' perspective, shared parental leave could also lessen the negative impact of discontinuous employment on their labour market careers as if it became more acceptable for either parent to take time out of employment for childcare responsibilities, then the discrimination mothers currently face because of career breaks might also be reduced<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 6.2 - Mother respondents - views about whether it should be a *mother* who stays home with children under age one year old**



<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 8 for a further discussion in the context of the ‘feedback multiplier effect’ (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004) whereby enabling policies that lift external constraints and expand options can in turn change behaviours (and cultures).



Exploring fathers' involvement in childcare further, a benefit of this study was that information was obtained in the survey about childcare provided by non-resident fathers. Through the childcare survey, it was possible to gain insight into the extent to which non-resident fathers were providing vital childcare to allow lone mothers to work<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, while access to flexible working arrangements is important for all fathers if traditional caring roles are to be seriously challenged<sup>10</sup>, there were indications from this study that these policies may be particularly important to 'fragmented families' (Smart and Neale 1999)<sup>11</sup>.

For many mothers, part-time work provides a possible solution when attempting to balance work and childcare and the mothers in this study were representative of UK mothers<sup>12</sup> as despite the associated career disadvantages<sup>13</sup>, almost two-thirds (64%) were working part-time. In addition, when asked, the majority (81%) of mothers working full-time either strongly agreed or agreed that they would reduce their working hours if they could afford to do so (figure 6.3). Non-working mothers were also asked what hours they would prefer if they returned to work and once again, the preference for most (76%) was part-time work (figure 6.4).

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<sup>9</sup> A particular example from the survey which illustrates the level of support was a lone mother living in the disadvantaged ward of Walker, with 4 children under the age of 11. The mother was working long hours (52 hours per week) and relied on her ex-partner to look after the children for 25-30 hours per week although he too worked full-time. When discussing the childcare arrangements with the mother respondent she said the father's employer was not very understanding of his circumstances and he often found it difficult to get time off when needed. However, despite these difficulties and the fact that the lone mother would have been financially better off by staying home (her earnings were low at £101-200 per week, raising to £201-300 with Working Families Tax Credit and child maintenance), the mother preferred to work and the father was committed to supporting her and his children.

<sup>10</sup> In particular, the longer hours worked by fathers in the UK (Marsh 1991) (O'Brien and Shemilt 2003) continues to make it difficult for them to spend more time with their childcare – see Chapter 5.

<sup>11</sup> Other studies have also shown that fathers often become more actively involved and take on more childcare responsibilities when they leave the family home (Smart and Neale 1999).

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 3 for a discussion of high levels of part-time among mothers of young children in the UK.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the low status, levels of employee protection and reduced career prospects associated with part-time work.



Figure 6.3 – Mother respondents working full-time – responses when asked if they would prefer to work fewer hours if they could afford to do so

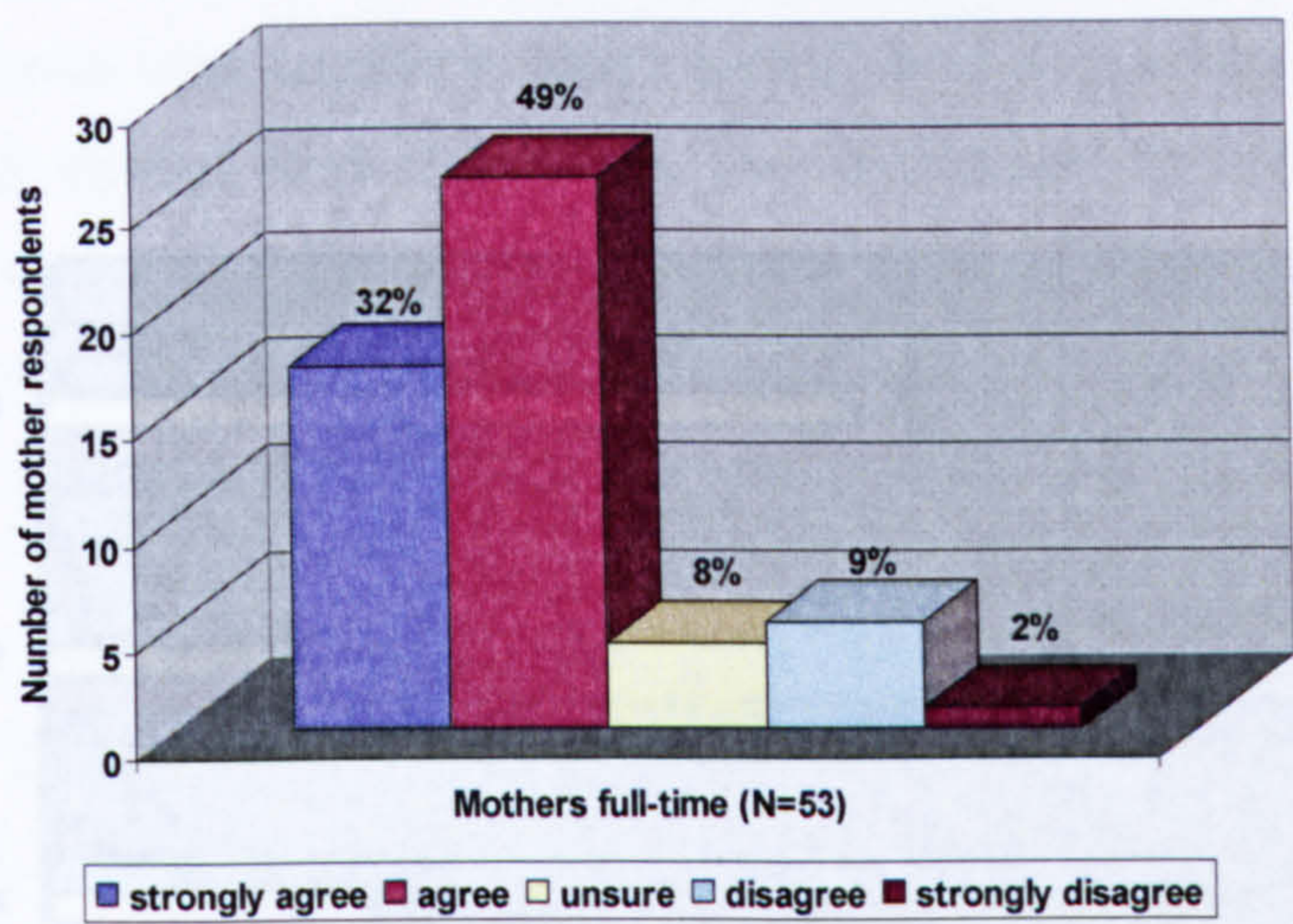
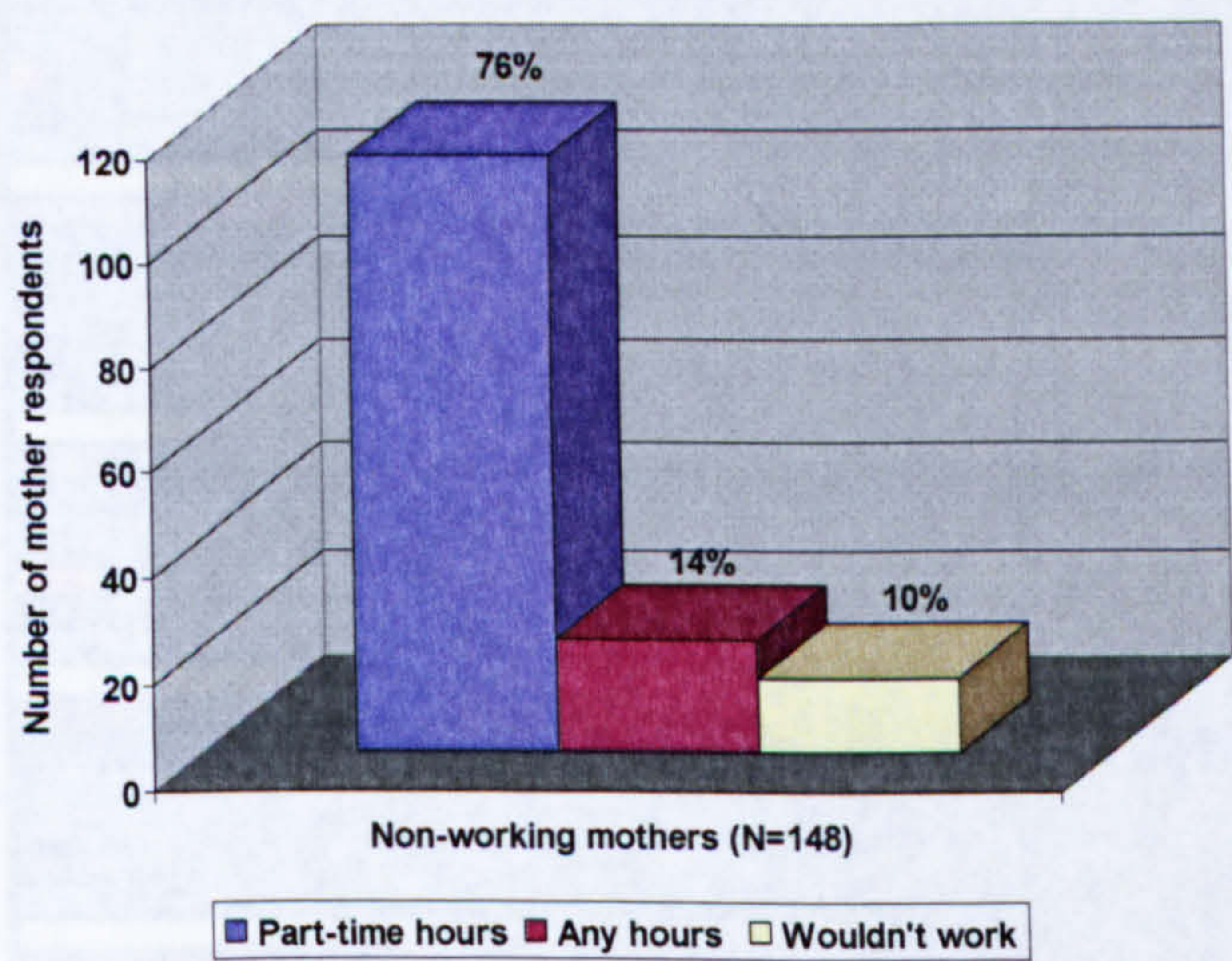


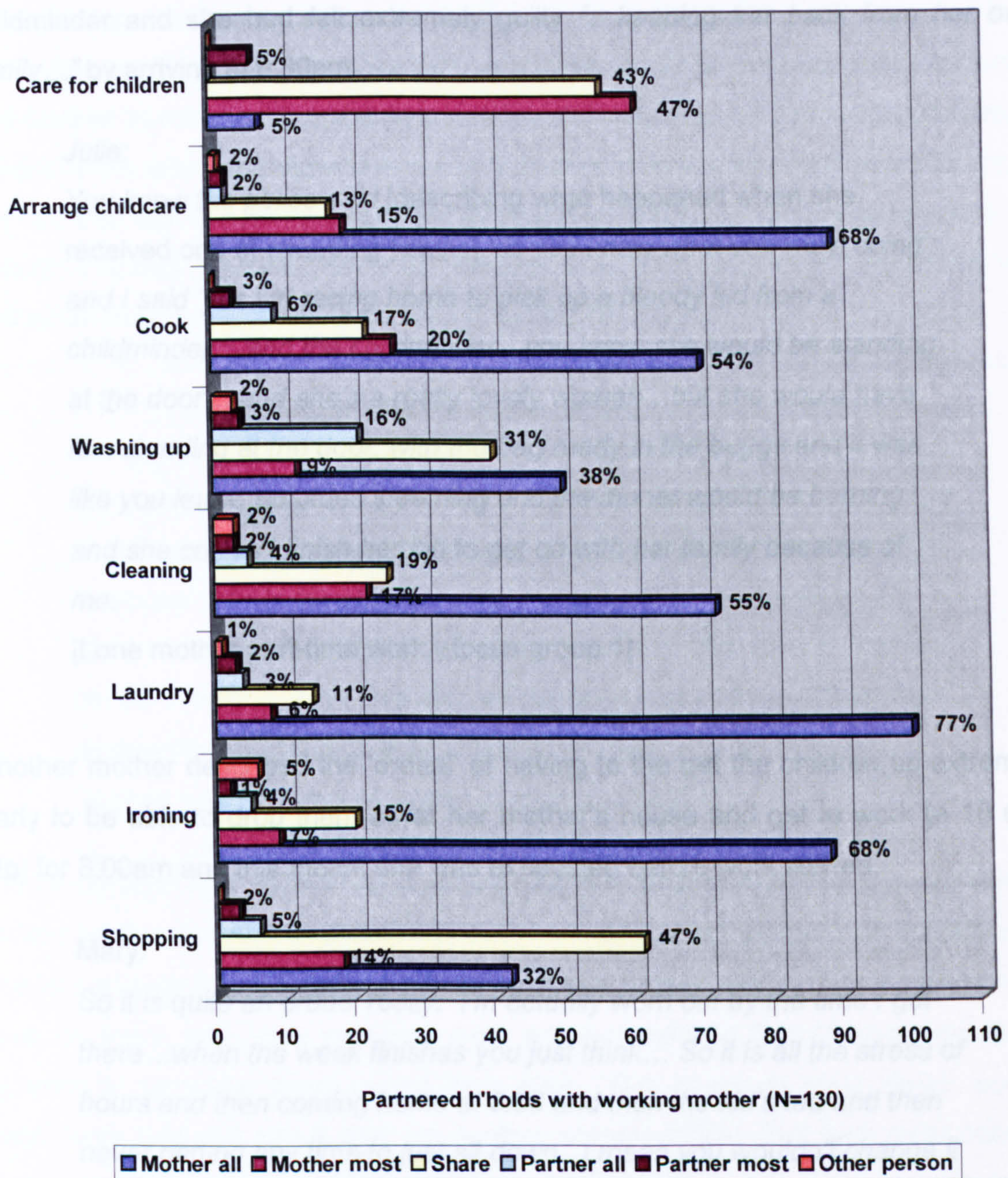
Figure 6.4 – Non-working mother respondents – preferred hours if working



These data imply that part-time work is a ‘choice’ made by mothers. However, this is not to suggest, as argued elsewhere, that this is an unconstrained choice or that the predominance of part-time work among British mothers implies they are less committed to paid work because they choose family over career (Hakim 1995). The problems arise when mothers are expected to work and also provide the majority of housework and caring and while there were dual-earner households in this study that said mothers and fathers shared the care of the children, almost half (47%) said the mother did most of the childcare while over two-thirds (68%) of mothers arranged all childcare (figure 6.5). Furthermore, as also shown in figure 6.5, many working mothers in this study had also remained responsible for either all or most of the basic housework such as cooking, cleaning and laundry.



**Figure 6.5 – Sharing of domestic labour in two-parent households where mother works**



Exploring this through the experiences of mothers in the focus groups and case study households, they discussed at length the stress of the dual burden of juggling paid work, housework and childcare. They talked about the nightmare of 'racing around' and 'rushing' to pick up the children. The picture that emerged was a serious one, as two mothers in one of the focus groups compared the number of speeding tickets they had received rushing to pick up the children from school or childcare.



Once again, this was exacerbated by a lack of understanding and flexibility on the part of employers and one of these mothers said she had had to leave a job she enjoyed because she was regularly being asked to work unreasonable hours and stay late after the normal work day. This was a problem as her son was with a childminder and she had felt extremely guilty “...keeping her back from her own family...” by arriving at 6:30pm.

*Julia:*

*You know the police said [describing what happened when she received one of speeding tickets] ‘do you know what you were doing’ and I said ‘yes I’m racing home to pick up a bloody kid from a childminder’...and the childminder...you know she would be standing at the door... and she’s a really lovely women...but she would have him standing at the door, with the bag ready in the buggy and it was like you know, potatoes steaming and the dinner would be burning and she couldn’t finish her job to get on with her family because of me.*

[Lone mother part-time work - focus group 1]

Another mother described the ‘ordeal’ of having to get the children up extremely early to be able to drop them off at her mother’s house and get to work (a 10 mile trip) for 8:00am and this meant she was exhausted before work started.

*Mary:*

*So it is quite an ordeal really. I’m actually worn out by the time I get there...when the week finishes you just think... So it is all the stress of hours and then coming home at 5:30 and then the kid’s tea and then never getting any time to just sit down. I mean you wouldn’t change it [this mother was referring to work, as she loved her job]...well you would perhaps change the fact that it has to be this way and you have to work full-time.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 2]



Considering the pressure on mothers in terms of time and energy in these circumstances it is, therefore, unsurprising that part-time work is an attractive option. Nevertheless, some mothers were also well aware of the consequences to their job prospects of reducing their hours, constraining their choice of jobs in the first place, and affecting their career advancement if they decided to work part-time when they had children. Mary, who described above the stress of full-time work and childcare, had worked in nursing for many years. However, she had only recently returned to full-time work when interviewed and she explained how previously she had changed her hours to work nights and part-time to fit around childcare. Unfortunately, she felt strongly this had prevented her from being considered for promotion, something she had achieved since increasing her hours to work full-time.

*Mary:*

*Doing nights is looked upon as...well you just never go anywhere when you do nights in my profession and doing part-time as well. You have to do full-time to get anywhere really...Yes [I changed hours] to fit around the children and as a result you are penalised really. It's like a vicious circle...I'm doing full-time now and I did get a promotion but as a result it is the kids that are the ones that suffer...I mean I am working it out but it is a bit of a nightmare really.*

*[Mother working full-time - case study household 2]*

Mary's situation is far from unique among mothers working part-time who are viewed as less work-orientated (Hakim 1995) despite findings that suggest it is misguided to see all part-time workers as a homogenous group (Walsh 1999). There are mothers, such as Mary, who view part-time work as necessary to fit their changing family situation at particular times during their lives. This does not mean these women value work less but rather they have other responsibilities that they must balance alongside their work commitments (Dex et al. 1995). To help these women manage their long-term labour market careers, government policy is needed to improve opportunities for flexible working. While the recently introduced legal right for parents to request flexible hours<sup>14</sup> is a step in the right direction, it must also be recognised that this will continue to fail parents like Mary until employers are legally bound to accept these requests and until there is properly enforced legislation to prevent discrimination of the kind described above (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004).

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<sup>14</sup> This was introduced in 2003. See Chapter 3 for more information.



There were other examples within the study of mothers who had found themselves making difficult decisions about work and family responsibilities, again contesting the notion of unconstrained 'lifestyle choices' (Hakim 2000) and instead illustrating the reality of 'no choice' situations. There were two types of forced circumstances: where a mother felt she had no other option but to give up work because of childcare costs; and where mothers felt they had to return to work because of financial constraints. An example of the first is Jane, a lone mother who took part in a focus group in the disadvantaged area of Newcastle upon Tyne. Jane had wanted to return to work after the birth of her daughter but, having carefully considered the financial aspects, had concluded that she could not afford to work. Even when help with childcare costs through Childcare Tax Credit was discussed<sup>15</sup>, it became clear that for many parents like Jane on very low incomes, even if they received the full 70 per cent tax credit, they would find it impossible to pay the additional 30 per cent required. Therefore, for Jane who was among the most disadvantaged group in this study (lone parent living in Walker), the type of employment she was able to access<sup>16</sup> was also a significant factor influencing her childcare decisions.

*Jane:*

*But sometimes you're no better off by going to work...I was working up to 6 weeks before I had Clare and I had to leave work I had no other choice. I couldn't rely on my mam and dad because they were both working...so I had no other choice but to leave and then when I worked it out anyway I was coming out with £550 a month, £480 was going on bills and I had like £70 a month to buy food plus my bus pass, paying for nappies, childminders...baby milk because you don't get tokens anymore... everything out of £70 a month. It was physically impossible so I had no other choice but to leave...  
...though they say if you are paying £100 a week for childcare they will give you some back...but what's the likelihood that you're going to be getting more than a £100 a week anyway to live on never mind paying childcare...how many jobs are there at the minute that would give you more than a £100 a week...[agreement and laughter from the group].*

*[Lone mother, not working - focus group 3]*

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<sup>15</sup> This tax credit had just been introduced at the time of the focus groups in late 1999 and the mothers had heard about it.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 5 for evidence of the lower status, lower paid employment in Walker ward.



While this is an example of force of circumstances and economic rationality as a result of the 'benefit-trap' in which many low-income workers find themselves, it was interesting that Jane was also being influenced by 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards 1999). During this discussion, Jane voiced her concerns about leaving her child with anyone other than family members - who were not available because they worked<sup>17</sup>. When the lack of her first choice childcare option was combined with the problems of finding a decently paid job, then her 'rationality' to give up work is more understandable. However, Jane felt she was being pressurised to work even though her daughter was very young (under age 1). Her perception was that the Government was failing her because of a lack of appreciation of how hard it is to leave your child to go out to work and to live on such a low income in difficult social circumstances.

*Jane:*

*...I think the Government work on this...like you see on the cereal packet family that doesn't exist...they insist that everybody's this happy family...a mother a father 2 kids everything is hunky dory...but they don't actually see the real life...they're living on this bloody cloud cuckoo land and they don't have a clue...if they actually came out and seen what it is like...*

[Lone mother, not working - focus group 3]

The situation for Lisa, a mother working full-time in one of the case study households, is an example of force of circumstances resulting in a mother returning to work against her deepest wishes to stay home with her children. Her reasons were also financial because of the insecurity of her husband's job, something that was shared by other mothers who described how the changing patterns of work and employment had meant their husbands or partners had been 'in and out' of work or doing 'bitty' jobs for a number of years. This had meant that some mothers had returned to work as soon as possible after childbirth<sup>18</sup>. For Lisa, there was a fear that they might lose the family home and this 'no option' situation, as found in others studies (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004), was not experienced by Lisa as a 'choice'.

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<sup>17</sup> See below for a further discussion of Jane's social and moral influences on childcare selection leading to a preference for 'family childcare'.

<sup>18</sup> One mother in the Walker focus group described how she had had to return to work when her baby was only one week old and another when the baby was 4 week old.



*Lisa:*

*Well I had no choice really because we couldn't afford not to. Well John had just started with his job...well actually when I fell pregnant with Jane [first child] he wasn't in full-time employment he was casual. So I had to go back.*

*...I find now when I come home from work I haven't got time for them and I know that sounds awful but you've got that much else to do. So you haven't spent all day with them and then when you come home you are running around doing other stuff and you just feel that you don't have time for them and then its time for bed. I would have rather have stayed at home.*

*[Mother working full-time - case study household 3]*

For Lisa, the decision to return to full-time work was particularly difficult as it clashed with her value system of the morally 'proper' role of a mother passed on from her own mother who felt strongly that Lisa should have stayed at home with the children. In this respect, while Lisa may have acted in an economically rational way out of financial necessity, in terms of 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards 1999), this socially unacceptable behaviour in the context of her family value system, had caused a great deal of internal conflict and was a source of underlying tension in her social relationship with her mother<sup>19</sup>. This illustrates the extent to which moral considerations are consistently underpinning decisions about the uptake of paid work and how these additional constraints also impact on mothers in particular who must face the consequences of conflict or alienation within their social relationships (Duncan and Edwards 1999) (Folbre and Weisskopf 1998).

These force of circumstances or 'no choice' situations whether, as in the examples provided, this is a mother who wants to return to work or a mother who wants to stay home, highlight the social and economic constraints and the influence of government policies on decisions about whether or not to (re)enter the labour market. However, as discussed earlier, the decision to return to work after having a child is rarely made separately from considerations about the availability, access and acceptability of childcare to fit the socio-economic circumstances of parents. Factors that influence the selection of childcare are explored in the following section.

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 7 when the strained relationship between Lisa and her mother is explored in more detail.



## Selecting childcare

Parents in this study had strong views about who they thought as appropriate to look after their children with a close interaction between the perceived negative aspects of some types of childcare which reinforced the perceived positive aspects of others. In terms of formal childcare, there were mixed views with some parents who preferred the security, accountability and daily monitoring of staff in a collective childcare environment such as day nurseries, while others said they preferred the intimacy of one-to-one childcare offered by registered childminders. The nature of the different views is presented below beginning with Lisa and John who said they would not have been happy with an individual childminder. They felt more comfortable with the well-run day nursery they had chosen for their children, which was extremely security conscious, with well qualified staff and good policies in place for the protection of the children. In contrast, Julia describes her feelings about day nurseries and why she preferred one-to-one childcare in a home environment as she wanted to provide a replacement home for her son while she was at work, something which also reflected her own ideological views of motherhood and her first preference which would have been to stay home herself (see 'Work and Childcare' above).

*Lisa:*

*You are never too sure with childminders and that...you know you hear all these stories and you think no.*

*John:*

*...well I'm glad we took the way we did with the nursery because I trust that because there are so many nursery officers...so there was the staff there and there was a management chain and everything. It was so well supervised and the security in and out.*

*[Mother and Father both working full-time and interviewed separately – case study household 3]*

*Julia:*

*But a private nursery...I thought it was like an institution. Even the nicest ones I didn't like. I thought it's nice for a child even if it's not in your house to be in a house where its quiet and the telly might come on and the Hoover's on, the washer's on, you go to the shops you come back...just things you would do with your mam. Like if you had your child at home. But that was when he was small...*

*[Lone mother part-time work - focus group 1]*



A further aspect for Lisa and John in favour of the day nursery was the educational element of 'learn through play' and they were pleased that their children had socialised and mixed with other children in preparation for school.

*Lisa:*

*...I think as well the good thing about the nursery was that they got taught a lot. Jane could read and write when she went to school.*

*John:*

*...I wouldn't have had Jane in nursery so soon at 3 months but I wouldn't have left it too late and I would have paid to have her in nursery, not full-time, but I would have had her in because I think it was good for her to socialise and learn to mix.*

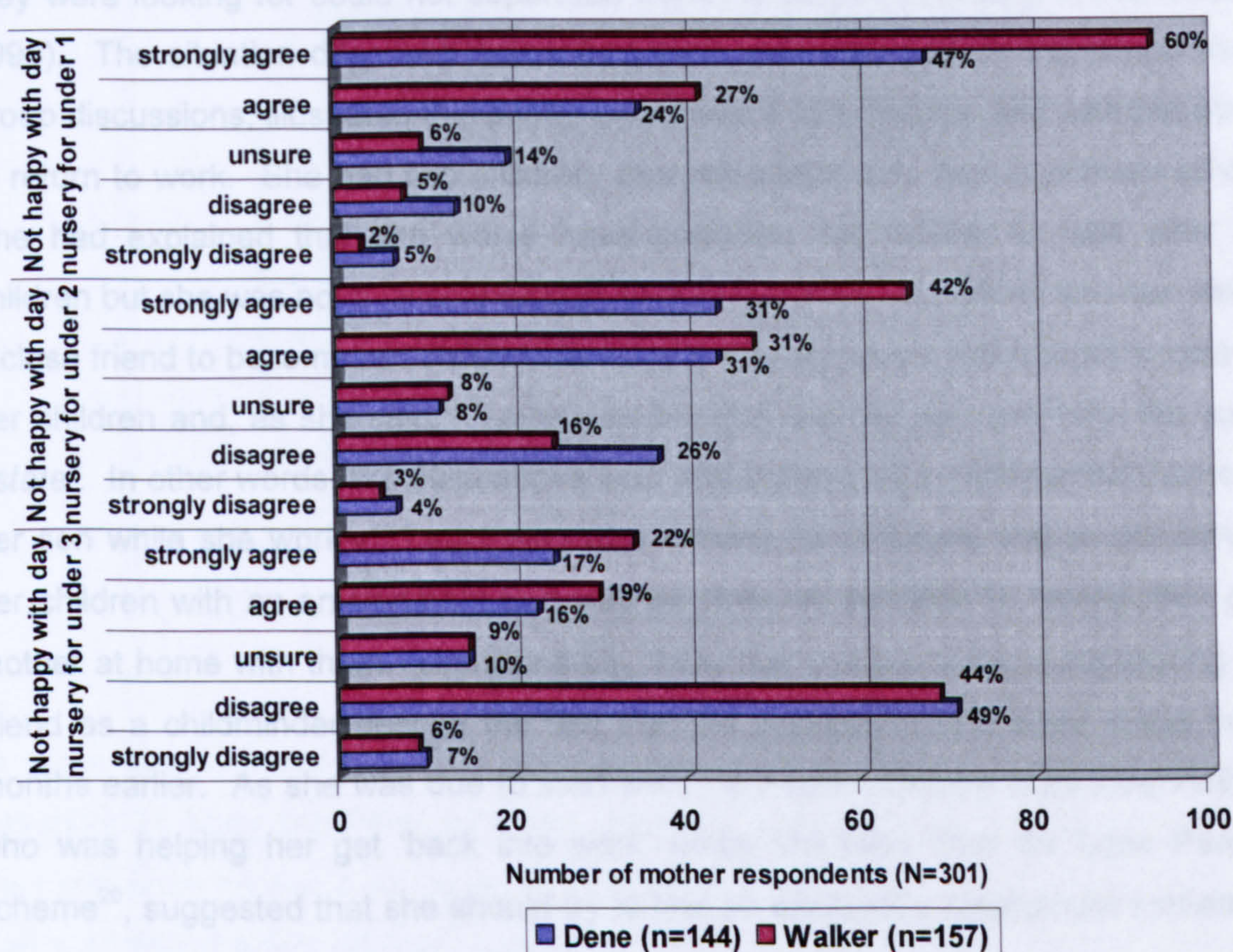
[Mother and Father both working full-time and interviewed separately  
– case study household 3]

However, as described by John above, while Lisa and John were happy with the choice of a day nursery they had regretted having to send their children as young as 3 months old. This connection with the age of children and what was considered appropriate childcare was also evident in Julia's comments above when she explained why she preferred one-to-one childcare, something which was qualified by her final statement, *"...But that was when he was small."*

When talking to parents during survey interviews, in focus groups and individual case study household interviews, it became clear that when the children reached a 'certain age', they felt they were ready for group interaction. This position is further supported by statistical evidence from the childcare survey and figure 6.6 shows the responses of mother respondents when asked if they would be happy for a child under age 1, age 2 and age 3 to attend a day nursery. This confirmed that the views differed considerably depending on the age of children. In both wards most mothers strongly agreed (47 per cent in Dene and 60 per cent in Walker) that they would not be happy putting a child under age one in a day nursery. However, these views changed dramatically once the children reached age 2 when fewer agreed with this statement, dropping even further when asked about children aged 3, suggesting by age 2 or 3 parents think their children are ready to learn to mix and socialise. Once again, this adds further support to proposed policy developments of longer maternity and paternity leave in the UK (H M Treasury 2004) to enable parents to stay with their children at least during the first year of their lives.



Figure 6.6 – Mother respondents' views about day nurseries



When the concerns about young babies in a collective day nursery environment were explored further during discussions with parents, it became apparent that these were connected to certain perceptions of neglect. Mothers in the focus groups talked about concerns of the child to staff ratio in day nurseries making it difficult to keep 'an eye on them' and to keep them safe. For other mothers, such as Lisa her concerns were based on experience, and despite her and John's satisfaction with the day nursery their daughter and son had attended, Lisa still felt as babies her children had not received sufficient emotional attention and had been left to cry. This had distressed Lisa and had added to her anxiety about leaving her children and to her desire to stay home and look after them herself.

*Lisa:*

[when asked if there was anything she didn't like about the nursery]...*well I don't think they got looked after as well as you would yourself. You know they were left screaming and crying.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 3]



However, what was also evident when talking to parents was that when choosing one-to-one childcare, even if this was registered, formal childcare, the type of care they were looking for could not be separated from the person providing it (Himmelweit 1995). The situation described below by Laura, who took part in one of the focus group discussions, illustrates this point. Laura was a lone mother and was just about to return to work. She had two children, one pre-school and one in primary school. She had explained that she would have preferred her mother to look after the children but she was not available as she worked full-time. Therefore, she had asked a close friend to become her childminder as this was someone she trusted to care for her children and, as she said, "...*she was like me, like my age and from the same estate*". In other words, like Julia above who was looking for a replacement home for her son while she worked, Laura was also looking for childcare that would provide her children with an environment that was as close as possible to having their own mother at home with them. Unfortunately, there had been a delay in registering her friend as a childminder despite the fact that the application had been made many months earlier. As she was due to start work very soon, Laura's New Deal Advisor who was helping her get 'back into work' under the New Deal for Lone Parents scheme<sup>20</sup>, suggested that she should try to find an alternative childminder something Laura was reluctant to do.

*Laura:*

*And she...the New Deal women...had said what about another childminder...but I said you can't just pick a childminder's name out the book can you...it has to be somebody they [her children] already know and I've known this person for a few years now...I know what she's like with her own children as well and that's why I asked her.*

[Lone mother – focus group 2]

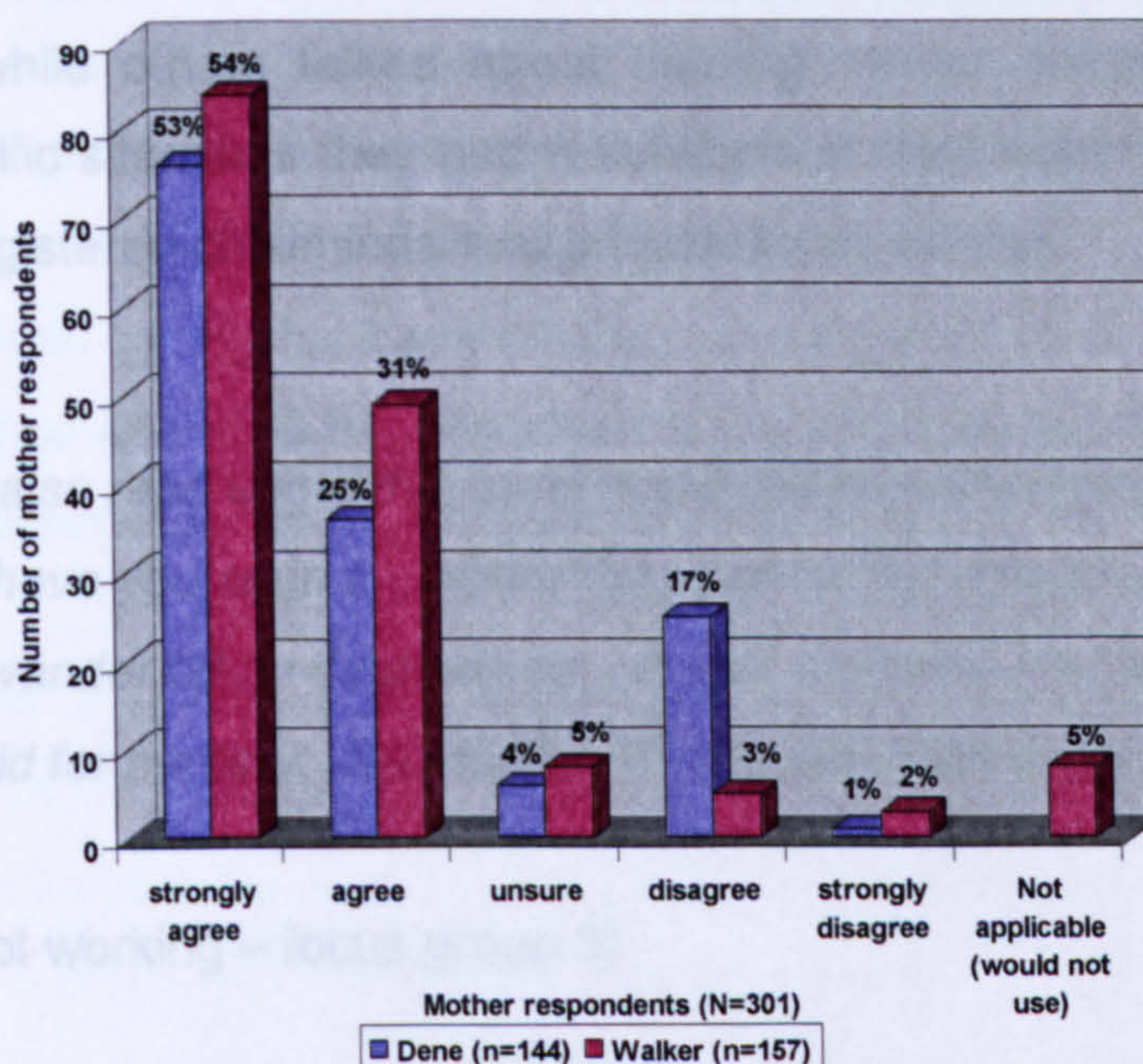
Concern from parents about leaving their children with people they did not know, even if these were professionally registered childminders, was a strong theme throughout the discussions with all parents. Once again, this was confirmed statistically and figure 6.7 shows the high percentage of mother respondents who strongly agreed (53 per cent in Dene and 54 per cent in Walker) or agreed (25 per cent in Dene and 31 per cent in Walker) that if they were going to use a childminder, they would only use someone they knew well.

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information about the New Deal for Lone Parents 'welfare to work' policy.



**Figure 6.7 – Mother respondents – views when asked if they would only use a childminder they knew well**



In some cases, these concerns were the result of a previous bad experience as described by Mary and Peter, who had employed a registered childminder to care for their son when he was a young baby. Understandably, this early bad experience had had a profound effect on Mary and Peter and Peter in particular admitted that as a result he found it very difficult to trust people with his children.

*Interviewer:*

*So you had childminder initially...and how did that work out for you?*

*Mary:*

*Well she was a big motherly woman but it didn't work out that well...I had to give up my job in the end because he wouldn't settle with her. She used to neglect him...he was covered in marks which...I just think she was a bit rough with him and don't think she ever changed his nappy and he always came back thirsty and hungry. I just think you just haven't got a clue what goes on behind closed doors.*

*Peter:*

*Other people frighten the life out of me to be honest...I just wouldn't put my kids at that risk.*

[Mother and father both working full-time and interviewed separately – case study household 2]



For other parents, their fears and concerns had been fuelled by high profile media reports from the local area and some of the mothers had known families affected by these incidents while others talked about hearing '*horror stories*'. Others gave examples of specific situations they had read about or had heard of through friends involving either registered childminders or private day nurseries.

*Clare:*

*Have you also read about this case in the papers about this private nursery...have you seen it...where they just let the children play in the park and wander off by themselves...2 year old twins and that's a private paid for nursery. So I feel as if you can't trust anybody...I just couldn't.*

[Mother not working – focus group 3]

*Lisa:*

*Well I've just heard stories. My friend, her little girl was at a childminder and the childminder used to give her a little shopping basket and she used to shoplift putting stuff in the children's shopping basket. You know you hear all these stories and you think no. I wouldn't do it.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 3]

For Lisa, these beliefs about the perceived 'dangers' of using a childminder were also reinforced by her mother's views and her mother Sylvia, who provided regular childcare support, described her concerns about her grandchildren being left with strangers. These views had, in part, formed the basis of Sylvia's decision to look after the children herself despite her objections and resentment at being constrained by childcare responsibilities<sup>21</sup>.

*Sylvia:*

*Plus I would rather do it. I would worry if they were with a stranger I wouldn't like them with a childminder because of all the cases of weirdoes...it doesn't matter how well they go through the credentials of anyone they still don't know what their minds are working like. And that was why...[why she agreed to look after the children]*

[Grandmother - case study household 3]

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<sup>21</sup> See below and Chapter 7 for more details of Sylvia's reluctance to provide childcare.



Sylvia's concern about childminders' 'credentials' was also echoed by a number of parents in this study who seemed to have little faith in the official registration and policy clearance process for those working with children. This was especially the case in disadvantaged areas such as Walker and the following discussion between mothers in that ward, some of whom had had personal experience of the system, summarises the main concerns. In particular, it highlights how inefficient policies and procedures might be exacerbating parental fears about safety and security creating real barriers preventing the use of some forms of childcare.

*Clare:*

*I mean this whole vetting system needs a good overlooking...*

*Liz:*

*People don't trust it basically...*

*Jane:*

*Exactly and you can't blame them...especially all the things you hear in the media about things happening whether it be childminders, nurseries, playgroups or whatever...*

*Liz:*

*Well its not kept up to date...we had someone here who said her checks came through after she had started working with the kids....*

*Jane:*

*Well mine didn't come though 'til after I had finished...we were doing voluntary work during the summer holidays and we had to be checked for it and mine come through after the whole thing was finished...*

*Liz:*

*I think the drawback with having the childcare register is you're actually trusting...you're not just trusting that person but when they're taking your child into their house you've then got to trust everybody within that house and everybody that they know and I just think its too much.*

*Clare:*

*I think everybody in that house should be vetted if you're registered.*

*Liz:*

*I think you would have to be extremely naïve in this day and age to just be able to leave your children with anybody*

*[Group discussion - focus group 3]*



While the theoretical argument presented throughout this thesis and empirical evidence presented here confirms the extent to which childcare selection is influenced by a number of socio-cultural factors, these factors inevitably interact with economic constraints such as the cost of formal childcare. Cost is an important consideration in childcare selection and parents throughout the study discussed how difficult it was to pay high nursery or childminder fees. Lisa and John had direct experience of 'crippling' childcare costs which were described by John as "...like having a second mortgage". As John and Lisa's full-time employment provided them with only a moderate joint income, John had taken a second job in the evening in an attempt to clear debt accrued partly by the strain of childcare nursery fees for two children. Other parents, especially mothers<sup>22</sup>, felt they were working for nothing when paying for childcare, implying that Childcare Tax Credits towards the costs of childcare were unhelpful because of the low income threshold<sup>23</sup>.

*John:*

*So we had them both in four days each and it wasn't long before we just couldn't cope with the cost.*

*[When asked how he felt working 55-60 hours/week]...Tired...but it has to be done. We have so much...not debt...well it is debt really but it didn't get on top of us but if I hadn't done this [taken a second job] it would have done. It was paying back from the kids in nursery which at the time we couldn't afford so you just take it from here and there.*

*[Father working full-time – case study household 3]*

*Nicky:*

*I mean it's the cost. I'll be working for nothing...it will cost me just under £100/week to have them both in the out-of-school club over the holidays. But I mean that's what I'll have to pay to get to work. I've been given this booklet on new family tax credit...but now my husband after all these years of working like part-time or whatever, has got a proper job so we'll be over the limit.*

*[Mother working full-time – focus group 1]*

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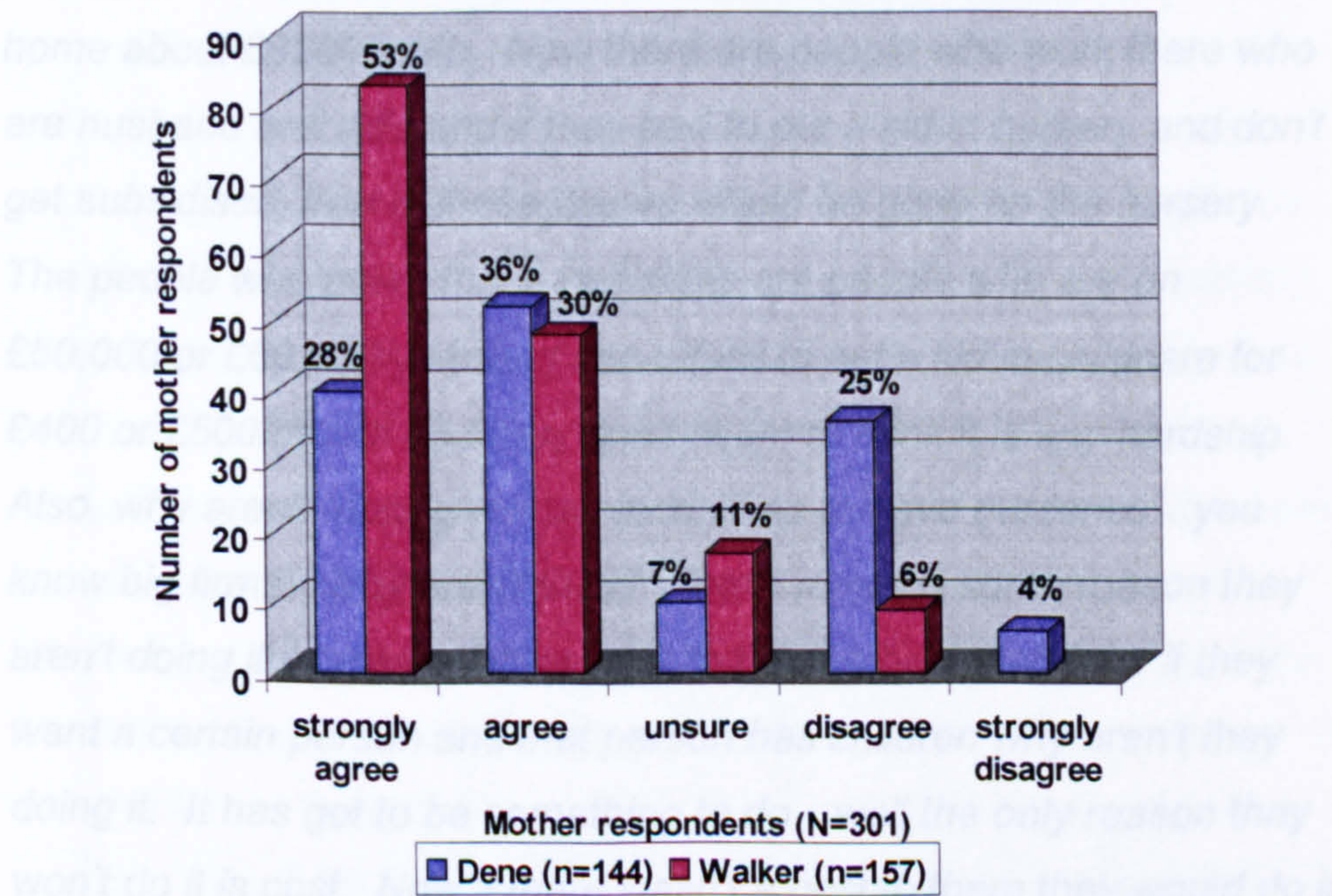
<sup>22</sup> As found elsewhere, in a two-parent working household it is usual for a mother's income to be used to pay for childcare costs (Brannen and Moss 1991).

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the problems associated with Childcare Tax Credit and the low levels of income required to qualify for full or even partial financial help with childcare costs.



Ability to pay for childcare was dependent on household income which varied considerably within, but especially between the two wards in the study<sup>24</sup>. However, while parents in the higher income ward of Dene were in a better financial position, overall there was strong agreement in both wards that paying for childcare was difficult. Nevertheless, the major financial difficulties were more apparent in the disadvantaged ward of Walker, where over half (53%) strongly agreed while a further third (30%) agreed that they could not afford to pay for regular childcare. As discussed in the previous section where Jane (a lone parent living in Walker) described her dilemma when deciding whether or not to return to work, this seriously calls into question the feasibility of parents on such low incomes being able to contribute towards childcare costs. This is especially the case under the current system in the UK where private childcare has been promoted which has high costs and limited financial support through Childcare Tax Credits which fails to support even the poorest families (Land 2002a; Land 2002b).

Figure 6.8 – Mother respondents – responses when asked if they felt unable to afford regular childcare



<sup>24</sup> See evidence in Chapter 5.



However, the full extent to which some parents felt the Government was failing to support them financially with the high costs of childcare is illustrated by the quotation below from the interview with John. John and Lisa's situation represents the position of moderate income families in the UK as because they both worked full-time they had an income above the threshold for any help with the costs of childcare. However, their moderate income made it financially difficult to pay for childcare<sup>25</sup> and John had passionate views about the lack of understanding from policymakers. He felt childcare should be subsidised because children are vital to our future and therefore the Government and businesses should be doing more to help parents manage their work and childcare responsibilities.

*John:*

*Why should two of us work full-time and then me going out to work part-time on top of that to pay off the debts from the childcare. I already pay my taxes...but I'm paying it for kids really, my kids which are the future and I mean everybody's kids are the future of the country. It annoys me. There is no incentive to work full-time, both of you, because it costs you that much. I mean I don't know how people manage. At my part-time job there are full-time staff there who take home about £620/month. Now there are people who work there who are husband and wife and if they had to put a kid in nursery and don't get subsidised, one of those wages would be gone on the nursery. The people who make these decisions are people who are on £50,000 or £60,000/year and can afford to put a kid in childcare for £400 or £500/month and they don't seem to think it is any hardship. Also, why aren't firms given tax incentives to have nurseries...you know big firms. Why aren't they? There must be some reason they aren't doing it...I mean if they want to get the best staff in or if they want a certain person and that person has children why aren't they doing it. It has got to be something to do...well the only reason they won't do it is cost. Now if there wasn't a cost to them they would do it.*

*[Father working full-time – case study household 3]*

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<sup>25</sup> The strain on John and Lisa's household finances and how this related to problems within their 'family childcare relationship' with Lisa's mother, is explored in the following chapter.



The help that was available to John and Lisa in the form of a free, part-time nursery place when their daughter reached age 3, had been of no use as they both worked full-time and this would have meant a complex 'childcare jigsaw' to fit around the morning or afternoon place they were offered at the local primary school. While there had been full-time nursery places available, they had been told that non-working parents had first access to these places, something which John found difficult to understand and accept. Therefore, they had had to keep their daughter in the expensive day nursery for a further year. However, as this was an Ofsted approved day nursery, the term after their daughter's third birthday they received Nursery Grant payments from the Government and this was equivalent to the 12 and a half hours per week free nursery place to which they were entitled. At the time of the study, this was approximately £1100 per year (around £90 per month) and had little impact on the financial strain of the high nursery fees John and Lisa paid for two children. Fortunately, by the time their son reached age 3, they were able to secure a full-time nursery place at the primary school and this had been a huge financial relief.

*John:*

*...well it was the end of the line even with just Tom in the nursery we just couldn't afford it...so we put him in nursery at the primary school. We applied for a full-time place which we had tried with Jane and we didn't think we would get because we didn't get it with Jane...they said 'oh it's for children with parents who aren't working they get the full-time places first'. It's absolutely crazy. But with Tom we actually spoke to them before they even gave out the places and said look we both work full-time and we have to have a full-time place. But we applied for it and they said we can't tell you if you've got full-time until about a week before. So we told them that we needed to know because we have to give a month's notice at the private nursery. So she told us that unofficially we had a full-time place...it was a relief...it was 9:00am to 3:00pm.*

*...Again, I think they think if both parents are working well they can afford to pay a childminder or to put them in a nursery but we couldn't.*

*[Father working full-time – case study household 3]*



Considering the dilemmas described here by parents when deciding who should look after their children, particularly concerns about safety and trust when handing over their children to 'strangers' and the financial difficulties of paying for childcare, many parents turned to complementary childcare. Especially when a family member provided this childcare the indications were that it helped parents overcome their anxiety at having to leave their children. Furthermore, as a mainly unpaid form of childcare<sup>26</sup>, it also provided a solution to financial provisioning as parents could realistically afford to work. The following section explores these issues in more detail, in particular considering why 'family childcare' was so important to parents in the study.

### **'Keeping it in the family'**

In direct contrast to parental concerns about formal childcare, complementary childcare provided by family members in particular was said to offer parents a 'peace of mind' that was vital to allow them to leave their children to go to work. In fact, parents talked in a very matter-of-fact way about family childcare implying this was a more 'natural' type of childcare with safety as a main advantage.

*Barbara:*

*Well it has made life easier because I know I haven't had to worry. It took a great chunk of worry because he was with his family.*

[Lone mother working full-time – case study household 1]

*Peter:*

*Well it's family isn't it...you know they are safe...Yeah because I think nobody looks after kids better than family. I really do.*

[Father working full-time – case study household 2].

*Lisa:*

*Well the kids like being with her [maternal grandmother]. They enjoy it. I know she'll look after them...you know they are safe.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 3]

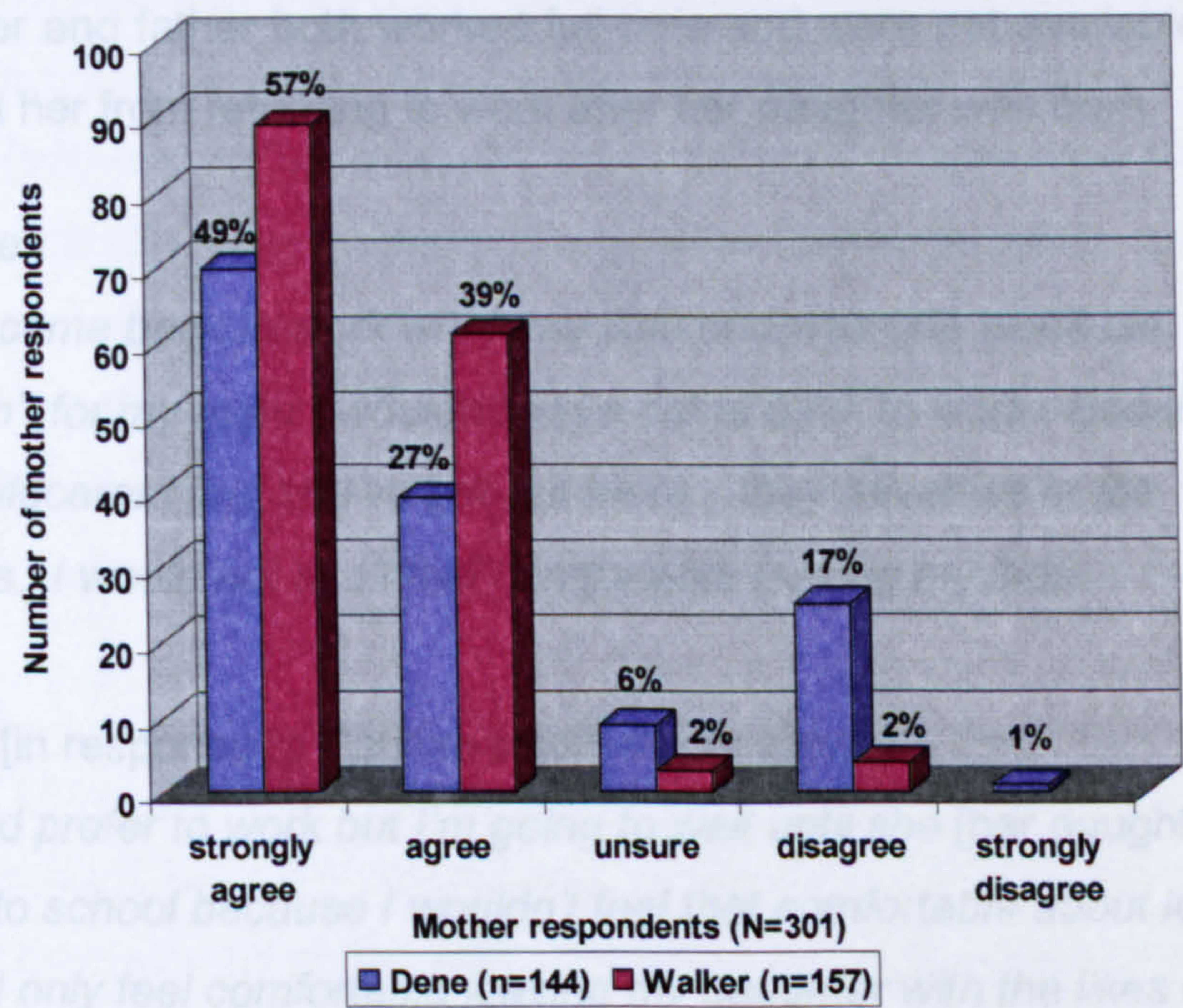
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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter for evidence of the small percentage of study participants who paid in cash for complementary childcare.



The perceived 'naturalness' of family childcare was rooted in family interdependence and a sense of obligation and duty (Finch 1989) (Finch and Mason 1993). In fact, Peter went on to say that in his opinion, family childcare, especially when provided by a grandmother, is, "...the natural order of things"<sup>27</sup>. The preference for family members was also confirmed statistically and in the childcare survey when asked if they preferred a family member to look after their children, the vast majority of mother respondents in both Dene and Walker wards either strongly agreed, or agreed with this statement. However, breaking this down further by ward, the levels of agreement were less strong in Dene with almost half (49%) who strongly agreed and less than third (29%) who agreed, whereas in Walker well over half (59%) strongly agreed with over a third (39%) who agreed (figure 6.9).

**Figure 6.9 – Mother respondents – Responses when asked if they preferred family members to look after their children**



<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 7 when Peter's traditional views of family obligation and duty are discussed in more detail in particular the way in which they conflicted with his wife Mary's views and the impact this had on their relationship.



This suggests that while preferences for family were strong overall, Walker parents were more likely to prefer family childcare. As parents in Walker, as the disadvantaged ward in the study, were exposed to greater levels of deprivation and poverty<sup>28</sup>, then it was expected that preference for family members would be based on financial constraints as the main factor. During discussions with mothers in the focus group in Walker, it became clear that other factors also contributed to preferences for family. In part this was influenced by mistrust and a lack of confidence in formal childcare in Walker ward<sup>29</sup>. However, it was also connected to socially and culturally embedded beliefs about the role of family and who is considered appropriate to look after children. Some mothers in the group stated clearly that their decisions about (re)entering the labour market were directly linked to the availability of family members and they would not have considered using a day nursery or a registered childminder. This is illustrated by Pauline's and Jane's comments below. For Pauline, the availability of her mother to look after her newborn baby was the only reason she returned to work. In Jane's case, the fact that her mother and father both worked full-time and were not available for childcare had prevented her from returning to work after her daughter was born.

*Pauline:*

*Well I came back to work when my little one was one week old...but if it wasn't for my mam I wouldn't have come back to work. Because the childcarers that you've got out there...they advertise in the papers. I would not at all feel comfortable leaving my kids...*

*Jane: [in response to Pauline's comments above]*

*I would prefer to work but I'm going to wait until she [her daughter] goes to school because I wouldn't feel that comfortable about leaving her...I only feel comfortable leaving my daughter with the likes of family...especially when you hear all the bad publicity. But then if you haven't got family and they're forcing you into work and you're not comfortable with leaving your child...well life's going to be hell isn't it.*

*[Group discussion in Walker ward – focus group 3]*

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 5 for a ward comparison of household incomes and access to material assets.

<sup>29</sup> There is a connection here to difficulties in attracting and maintaining high quality services in disadvantaged areas. Therefore, the mothers in the focus groups were aware of high profile cases where nurseries had been closed down because of neglect or abuse. As discussed in Chapter 3, the policy initiatives to improve nursery provision in disadvantaged areas through Children's Centres is trying to address these issues.



Here the mothers' value systems influenced decisions about paid work therefore demonstrating the duality of individual agency and structure (Kabeer 2000). Pauline and Jane were both subject to economic and political structural constraints, particularly Jane who felt targeted as a lone parent by government 'welfare to work' policies. Yet both mothers had resisted these pressures through their 'purposeful choice' (Folbre 1994) for family childcare<sup>30</sup>. In both cases, it is unlikely that incentives to use formal childcare would have changed their childcare preferences and this is more clearly demonstrated by the childcare choice made by Louise, a mother who took part in a focus group in another disadvantaged area of Newcastle.

Louise worked part-time and her husband worked full-time. However, as Louise and her husband's joint income was low, they qualified for and were in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit and therefore they could have claimed Childcare Tax Credit to help with the costs of childcare if they had been using formal, registered childcare. However, Louise preferred to have a family member look after her children while she worked and she paid this person for childcare. Louise was aware that if she had used a registered childminder she would have received help with the costs of childcare. In fact, another member of her family was a registered childminder and she could have cared for the children. Despite this childcare option, Louise preferred to keep her children with the family member who they knew well and where they were happy. Therefore, even though Louise had to find the money for childcare from her low income, the possibility of help with childcare costs through Childcare Tax Credit was not an incentive for her to change her childcare arrangements.

*Louise:*

*...well I have got a family member who is a registered childminder but my kids don't know her as well and I prefer to do it where they are happy no matter what the cost. The kids are used to where they are [with another family member]. I mean I know her well [the family member who is a registered childminder] but the kids don't know her that well whereas they see this other family member all the time and I prefer that even though I miss out on the childcare allowance.*

*[Mother working part-time – focus group 1]*

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<sup>30</sup> See also 'Work and Childcare' above where Jane's economic position in the form of the 'benefit trap' is explored which also contributed to her decision about work and childcare.



These examples of different types of 'rationalities' based on non-monetary social, moral and emotional factors about the mothers' well-being in terms of feeling comfortable with who was looking after their children, and the happiness of their children while being cared for by others, emphasise the inadequacy of theories of economic rationality when considering childcare selection. Yet, policymakers in the UK continue to use financial incentives for formal childcare only, explicitly excluding complementary childcare<sup>31</sup>, which underestimates the powerful influence of 'gendered moral rationalities' as primary considerations which may override economic calculations (Duncan and Edwards 1999).

In terms of the interaction between individual agency and structure, it is also clearer through these examples to see how the social context in which these mothers were exercising their agency was creating constraints on the 'choices' available to them. As Walker ward represents the lower social class in this study<sup>32</sup>, the social structural constraints of traditional working class values, linked to ideologies of motherhood and morally and socially acceptable behaviour within their community about who is appropriate to care for children, were highly influential. While the influence of these factors was also apparent when talking to parents in the case study households in Dene ward, this had not prevented the use of formal childcare<sup>33</sup> suggesting cultural norms were more entrenched in the more disadvantaged area. It also demonstrates how preferences are socially constructed, and while individual actions are not necessarily predetermined at the household level, they are bound by overarching structures which affect how individuals exercise their agency (Folbre 1994).

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the exclusion of complementary childcare from the Childcare Tax Credit system.

<sup>32</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, this is based on socio-economic factors as indicators used to highlight inequalities which are most often associated with class position. In particular educational attainment and access to well paid employment – see 'Work and Childcare' above where Jane described how unlikely it was that she would be able to find a decently paid job.

<sup>33</sup> In the two 'middle-class' case study households in Dene the parents had used formal childcare and were less influenced by traditional values and norms. In comparison, in the Walker case study household, 'traditional solidaristic' (Brannen 2003) working class values were very influential. The influence of the family value systems of the case study households is explored in detail in Chapter 7.



However, the major consideration underpinning these decisions about childcare, and the most significant aspect of complementary childcare as contributing to theoretical understandings of the nature of care, is the importance of the person providing the care (Himmelweit 1995). In all of the cases above, the preference for family childcare was associated with a person who the mothers and children trusted and, most importantly, someone with whom they had a pre-existing and close relationship. This has been found to be important in studies of care provided by family and friends to the elderly and disabled (Qureshi and Walker 1989) (Ungerson 1999), but may be particularly important for the care of children who are seen as especially vulnerable and precious to their parents. It was clear when talking to parents that when childcare was being provided by a grandparent (usually a grandmother as the 'next best thing' to a child's own mother (Wheelock and Jones 2002)), the care represented a special 'type of care'. It provided something 'extra' because, as described by a grandmother herself, they "...loved them to bits." [Grandmother – case study household 3]. This was also connected to ideological beliefs and identities of motherhood, and the presence of a socially acceptable 'substitute' such as a grandmother who could provide emotional as well as physical care (Ungerson 1983) (Graham 1983) appeared to overcome some of the moral obstacles mothers faced when going out to work. The value Mary placed on these aspects of care is illustrated below as she was comforted by the fact that her mother cared *about* the children in the same way she cared *about* them by ensuring they looked nice and that they felt loved by giving them a kiss at the school gates.

*Mary:*

*I feel happy that its their grandma and she'll treat them...you know the fact that she will treat them to things and look after them and I don't know there's just something about your mam isn't there that the minute I drop them off she'll make sure they are looked after and their hair is brushed and that they look nice for school and they'll have a kiss from her at the school gates. Do you know what I mean...more than a childminder would do. Its nice and you know she is 100% reliable. I feel happy the fact that the kids are not pulled from pillar to post ...they are with their grandma...they are with their family.*

[Mother working full-time – case study household 2]



It was clear during discussions with the mothers that leaving very young children was particularly hard and in these early years, family childcare was a strong preference, and as found in other studies (LaValle et al. 1999), grandparents were the first choice for babies and toddlers<sup>34</sup>.

*Nicky:*

*Well my mam was first choice when they were little and would still be me first choice if my dad was in better health [grandmother looking after grandfather who was in poor health]...*

*Julia [in response to Nicky's comments above]:*

*Yes...if my mam had been healthy enough definitely my mam as well [would have been first choice when her son was a baby]. I used to feel dead jealous when people would say 'such-and-such's grandma will have them every day', you know sleeping over...you hear people say 'well they go to my mam's' and they have a cot and everything and that is really good...they have two places that are really familiar.*

[Group discussion – focus group 1]

Again, as illustrated in the quote above from Julia, some mothers were looking for an environment where their children would feel as if they were in their own home, and Julia went on to say she wanted somewhere like a 'duplicate' home so it would not be too much of a change for her young son. Childcare in a family member's home, especially a grandparent's, was considered the ultimate 'second home' environment as this coincided with a sense of 'belonging' most often associated with the comfort and protection of a family home (Morgan 1996). All of the grandparents in the case study households made comments about their home being like a 'second home' to the children, especially as they spent so much time there because of the childcare they were providing. This quote from Edna illustrates this point.

*Edna:*

*I mean this is like a second home...it's not as if he thinks oh I don't want to go to my gran's again or anything like that.*

[Grandmother – case study household 1]

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<sup>34</sup> The LaValle et al study found a strong preference for grandparents for children aged 0-2 years.



Connected to this, and in accordance with what some parents said they were looking for in a childcarer, grandparents also described their role as a ‘replacement’ or ‘substitute’ parent. For Sylvia this also meant being involved with school activities to make sure that the children had someone there for important events.

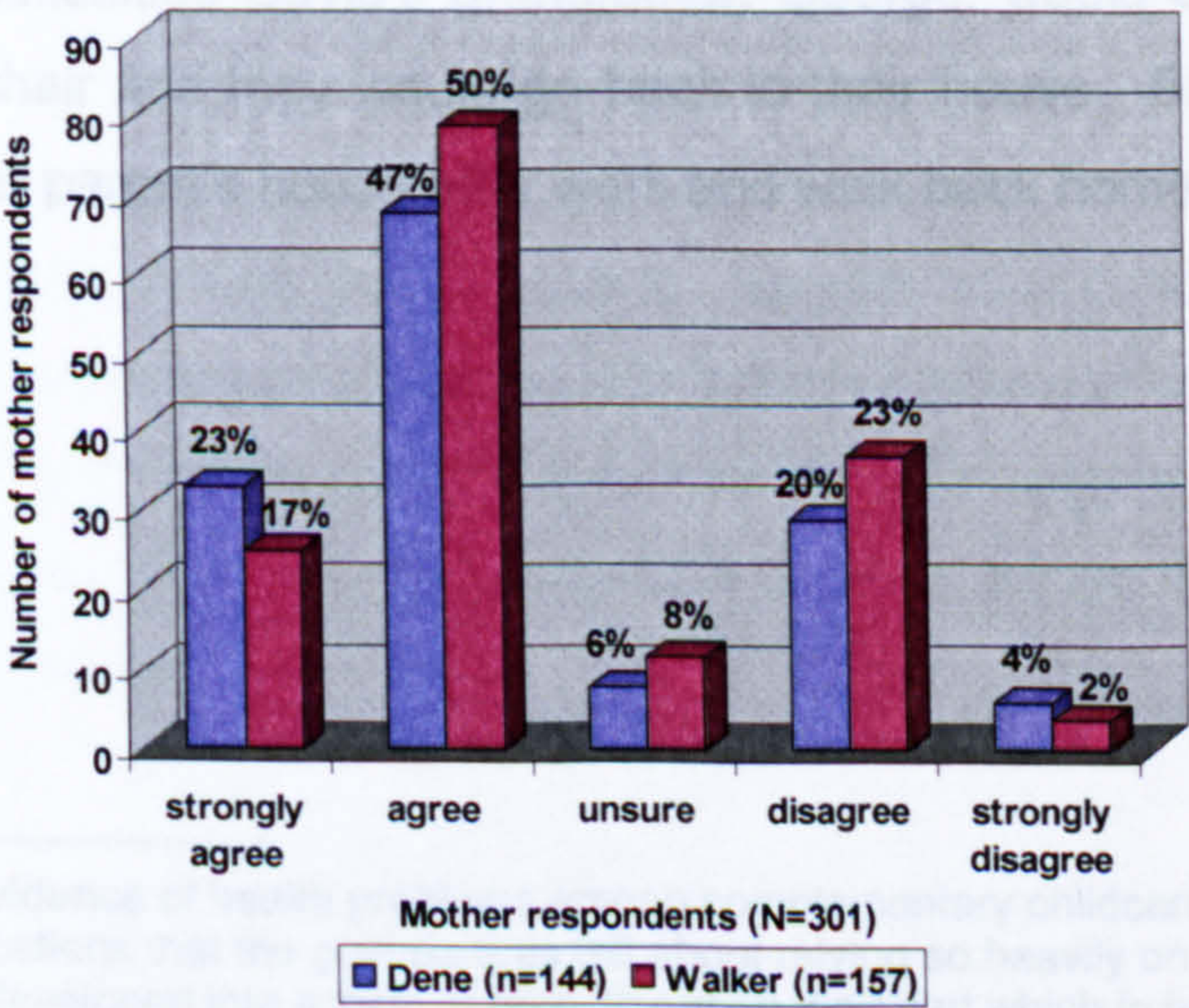
Sylvia:

*But she is like my baby. I used to always say that that she might as well have been my baby because I had her from so little...So I help out as much as I can at school with them because I feel somebody should be there. Like sports days...I go because they [the parents] can't get there. I feel sad about that. It cuts me because they want their mam and dad there really.*

[Grandmother providing part-time childcare – case study household]

Nevertheless, despite the preference for these additional aspects of emotional closeness and stability which parents in the study felt were best provided by family members, parents also described how they were torn between their strong preference for family childcare and the guilt they felt when asking for support on a regular, weekly basis. This caused a ‘preference dilemma’ for many parents as they wanted the benefits of family childcare but at the same time, they felt they were taking advantage of their family. When asked in the childcare survey if they felt they were ‘putting onto’ family members by asking them to look after the children on a regular basis, half of mother respondents in both wards (47 per cent in Dene and 50 per cent in Walker) agreed with this statement (figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 – Mother respondents – responses when asked if they felt they were ‘putting onto’ family members by asking for regular childcare





Contributing to the 'preference dilemma', parents in the case study households were also concerned that it was too much for older grandparents in particular to cope with young children something which was often more difficult because of ill health among grandparent childcarers<sup>35</sup>. These parents were also concerned about interfering with the retirement plans of grandparents by asking them to commit to regular childcare at a time when they should be relaxing and taking life a little easier<sup>36</sup>. While all parents interviewed in the case studies discussed these concerns, Barbara felt particularly guilty because of the level of support her parents had had to provide.

*Barbara:*

*I think I feel incredibly guilty that they should be relaxing and enjoying their retirement more than they are...I just feel guilty that they have got him all the time...I did think my mam and dad were getting old...and obviously they are a lot older now than they were then [when they started looking after her son] and my dad had had to leave work at 56 because he had angina so he was made redundant from work and I thought maybe it was a bit too much for them.*

[Lone mother working full-time – case study household 1]

The guilt Barbara felt and the strain on her parents was exacerbated by the fact that the early days of childcare were extremely difficult as neither had access to a car. To allow Barbara to get to work on time, she had to get the bus at 7:15am and therefore it was not possible to take David to her parents' house first. Although they lived in the same ward, her parent's house was over a mile away and therefore Barbara had to arrange for a taxi to bring her mother, Edna, to the house for 7:00am each morning to care for David. Edna would then get David ready, give him his breakfast and as she had mobility difficulties David's grandfather, George, would come later to help her with the pushchair and they would go back to their house. Barbara would then pick David up at her parent's house after work and walk back home.

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 5 for evidence of health problems among complementary childcarers in this study.

<sup>36</sup> There were also indications that the guilt parents felt about relying so heavily on family members for regular childcare had developed into a form of resentment on their part which in turn created situations of unease and sometimes family conflict. This is explored further in Chapter 7.



*Barbara:*

*My mam would get a taxi down here in the morning that I would pay for and she would walk back up...my dad would come to help and they would walk home...so she would be down here for about 7:00am in the morning and I would go out for the 7:15am bus and then get the bus to their house at night and walk home with David in his pushchair. He was just over 3 when I managed to get a car and that helped a lot.*

*[Lone mother working full-time – case study household]*

Once again, situations such as these demonstrate the obstacles some parents have to overcome to enable them to go out to work. This childcare arrangement was not only physically tiring and demanding for both Barbara and her parents but also having to pay for a taxi every day was a severe drain on Barbara's limited finances. It also highlights how policies designed to support parents using complementary childcare, for example in this case help towards the cost transport, could greatly improve the well-being of parents, children and those providing vital childcare.

To consider further how the social and economic demands of regular childcare impact on the lives of grandparents, the following chapter looks at this in the context of the 'family childcare relationship' through the experiences of grandparents and parents in the case study households. In particular, it explores how other commitments and priorities, and issues of ill health<sup>37</sup>, determined the level of support the grandparents were able, or prepared to provide, reinforcing the negotiated rather than unconditional nature of family obligation (Finch 1989) (Finch and Mason 1999) in relation to family childcare. However, it also highlights the dilemma for grandparents torn between a desire to help and varying levels of resentment because of the constraints of family childcare. Therefore, while the positive aspects of love and affection, safety and stability, as well as reducing financial constraints made family childcare a preferred option, this type of childcare was not unproblematic. When talking about ways to support complementary childcare in general and family childcare in particular, the issue of payment was discussed as a way of easing the guilt felt by parents and lessening the economic consequences faced by grandparents. The role of payment for family childcare is the subject of the last section of this chapter.

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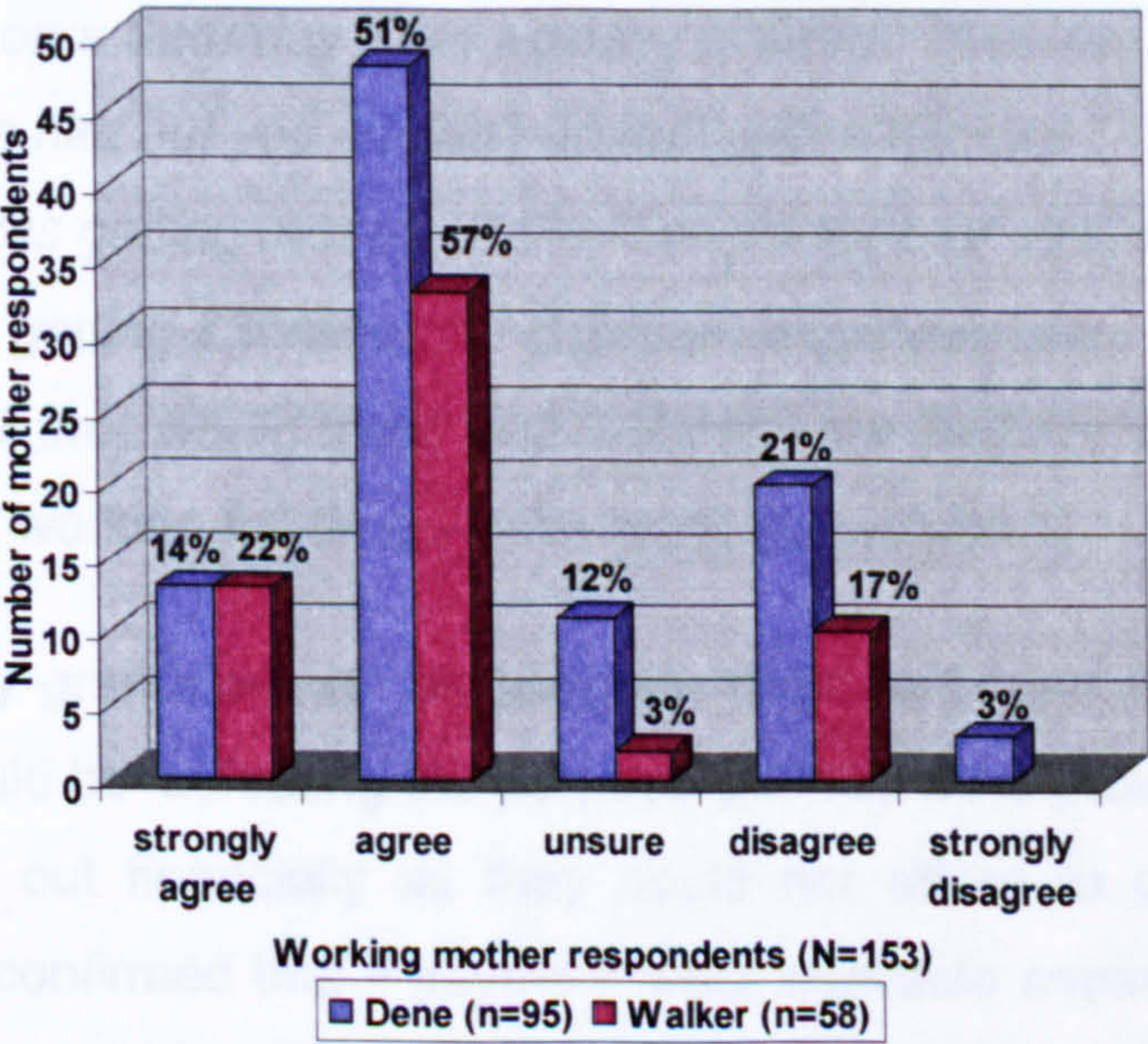
<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 5 for further evidence of competing demands and ill health among complementary childcarers.



# ‘For the love of it’: paying family for childcare

In this study almost all complementary childcare, especially when provided by family members, was unpaid although parents said they tried to provide regular ‘payment in kind’ by helping out in other ways<sup>38</sup>. When talking to parents during the childcare survey interviews, the reciprocal provision of services or gifts was described as a way of making them feel less guilty about the amount of help and support they received from family members who were providing regular, weekly childcare. However, payment in services was also linked to a lack of ability to pay in cash and although there were some parents who said paying for childcare was not a problem<sup>39</sup>, for others it would not have been financially viable to work if they had had to pay childcare from their earnings. When asked, almost two-thirds (62%) of working mothers using complementary childcare for work purposes said they could not afford to pay the childcarer. However, when they were asked if they would prefer to pay family members for regular childcare (figure 6.11), cumulatively two thirds of working mothers in Dene ward either strongly agreed or agreed (14 per cent strongly agreed and 51 per cent agreed) with over three quarters in Walker (22 per cent strongly agreed and 57 per cent agreed).

Figure 6.11 – Working mother respondents – responses when asked if they would prefer to pay for family childcare



<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 5 for evidence which supports findings from other childcare studies (Meltzer 1994) (LaValle et al. 1999) (Wheelock and Jones 2002) that family childcare is usually unpaid although ‘payment in kind’ is common.

<sup>39</sup> As discussed in Chapter 5, over a third (36%) of working parents in the higher income ward of Dene said they could afford to pay for formal childcare but were using complementary childcare, reinforcing this an ‘active choice’ based on socio-cultural rather than economic grounds.



In the childcare survey when parents talked about their preference to pay family, they said this was once again related to guilt and that if family members were receiving something for childcare they would not feel as if they were taking them for granted and they would feel less indebted for their help. All of the mothers in the case study households also said they would prefer to pay the grandparents for childcare. Barbara said she would not feel that she was “...*putting onto them as much*” [case study household 1], while Mary said she “...*wouldn't feel so guilty*” [case study household 2], and Lisa said “*I wouldn't feel as if I was taking advantage of her as much*” [case study household 3]. However, they also said that the grandparents would not take payment from them directly, but all three mothers felt the grandparents would be more inclined to accept it if it was a recognised government childcare payment. For Barbara, she felt strongly that her parents would benefit from extra income especially as they were struggling financially and they were providing childcare support above and beyond the services available from formal childcare.

*Barbara:*

*They are both on pensions and they don't have a great deal of money so it would help them a lot...Well they are offering the same childcare...well more because they are doing the emergency childcare as well at the drop of a hat. They offer that extra flexibility. It's the same on a Saturday if I'm working overtime, they are quite happy to have him but you couldn't do that with a nursery...  
...I think if I was getting money off the Government for childcare and I could say I'm getting £30/week for childcare expenses and I gave that to them I think they would think, well that's not our Barbara's money*  
[Lone mother working full-time – case study household 1]

From the case study grandparents' perspective, they confirmed that taking money from the parents would be 'defeating the purpose' as they were providing this support to help the parents out financially as they could not afford to pay for childcare. However, they also confirmed that if payment were available separate from parents' earnings they would accept it. This was especially the case for Edna and Sylvia as they were both on low incomes<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> It is not suggested that the grandparents' motivation for providing childcare was based on payment as they talked about the intrinsic rewards gained from helping out and spending time with their grandchildren. However, there were also issues of 'acceptable' levels of support and where grandparents faced specific economic constraints this appeared to influence how they viewed the role of payment (see Chapter 7).



There was also a discussion about the Government's reliance on grandparents to allow parents to work. Therefore, when talking about the financial support available for some parents through Childcare Tax Credit, Edna and Sylvia both felt they should be included as they were providing the same service, if not better, as paid childminders.

*Edna:*

*If the money say was coming from the Government to help people who look after children...not coming out of Barbara's pocket. But if it was coming from somewhere else [referring to a government payment] you would quickly accept it...*

*...if they want to help the young ones get back to work or get started again they have to have someone trustworthy to look after their children haven't they. They pay a childminder [through Childcare Tax Credit] and what they charge a day is extortionate*  
[Grandmother - case study household 2]

*Sylvia:*

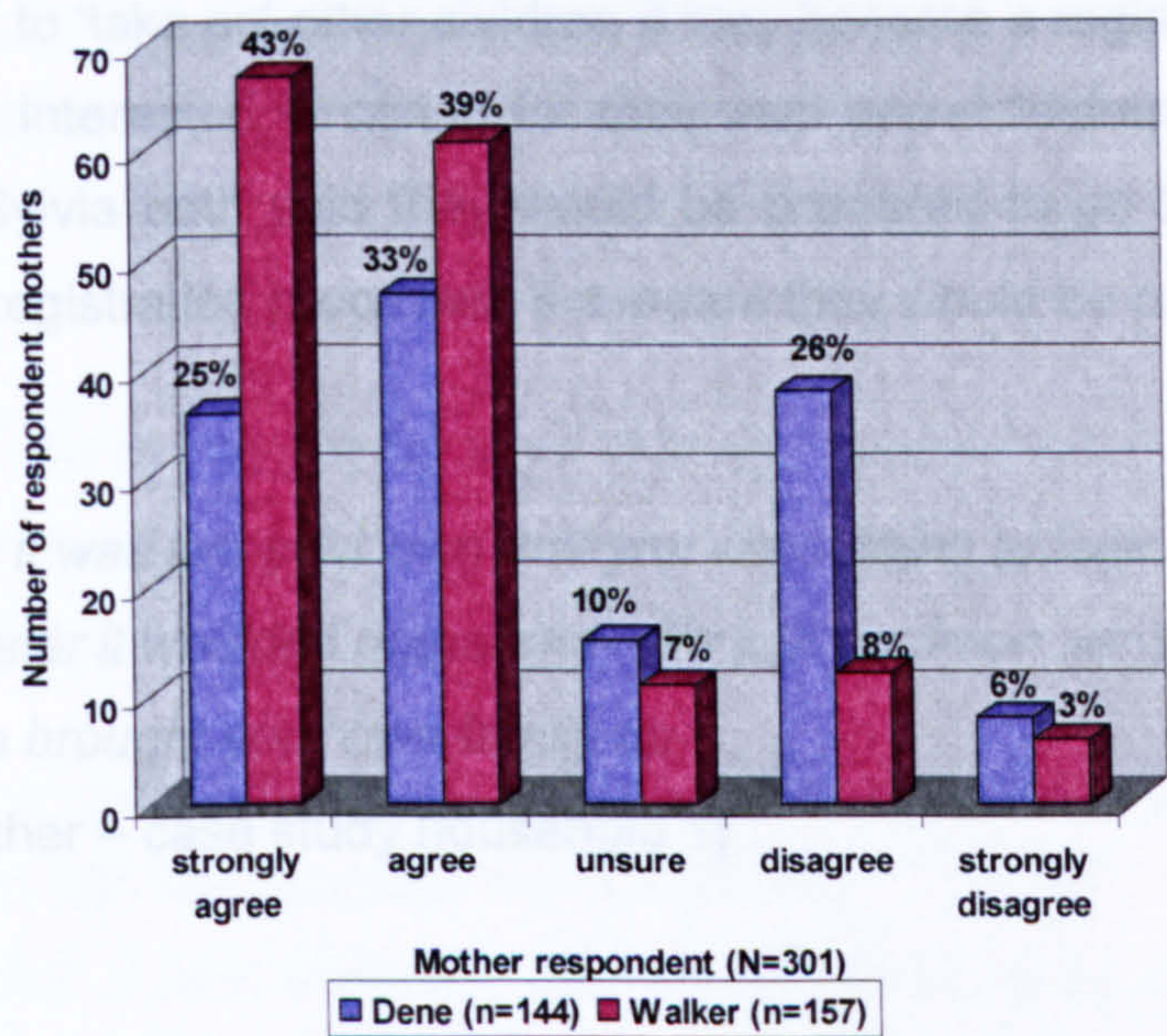
*But I would hate taking money off her...I know she is working because she needs the money...*

*...Oh I would take [if the money came from a government allowance]...I mean we need the money...if they can pay for one lot [referring to paying childminders through Childcare Tax Credit] why can't they pay for another lot [grandparents]. Because we are like a little army of grandparents now. You see so many grandparents looking after children. I think they are relied on more than in my day.*  
[Grandmother - case study household 3]

During this discussion about Childcare Tax Credit, it was also explained to both parents and grandparents that if grandparents became registered childminders and if the parents qualified, Childcare Tax Credit might be available. This topic was raised with both parents and grandparents in order to gain their views about registration of family members following findings in the childcare survey that parents did not think family should have to register to enable parents to claim Childcare Tax Credit. This was particularly the case in Walker ward where almost half (43%) strongly agreed and a further third (39%) agreed that family should not have to register (figure 6.12).



**Figure 6.12 – Mother respondents – levels of agreement or disagreement that family members should not have to register to enable parents to claim CCTC**



When this was followed up in the in-depth interviews with case study household parents, it was clear that they did not think grandparents should have to register with concerns that they might be offended if asked to undergo house and safety checks. They also thought grandparents would be resistant to the idea of training courses because they were from a generation where training courses were not part of their regular experience. Furthermore, they felt the grandparents would already feel more than qualified to care for childcare having successfully raised children of their own. The discussion with Barbara is a good illustration of a parent’s perspective.

*Barbara:*  
*Well I don't think my mam would want people coming around the house and nosing around...well she brought us up and didn't have a problem so why should somebody come in and tell her what she can and can't do. But then I think if they said yes as long as you register and just provide proof that you are minding him and we would pay then fine I think she would register...but going in and saying you can't leave that there...she wouldn't like that...*  
*[when asked if her mother would mind doing a training course] Oh she wouldn't do anything like that ...definitely not. Maybe if she was younger...she's from a different generation.*  
*[Lone mother working full-time – case study household 1]*



Interestingly, while the case study grandparents had some concerns, they were not especially resistant to the idea of registration. The main concern was related to the prospect of having to 'take on' other children if they became a registered childminder, as they were only interested in caring for their own grandchildren. However, once again Edna and Sylvia both said they would be prepared to go through the safety checks and other registration processes if it meant they would be paid for childcare.

*Edna:*

*As long as it was just your own that you were going to look after. I would register it wouldn't bother me...it's just common sense really and you've brought your own family up.*

[Grandmother – case study household 1]

*Sylvia:*

*So they would come and check your house...Yeah...that's fine unless they said it wasn't a safe environment. But that wouldn't bother me that. Getting paid would be better...*

[Grandmother – case study household 3]...

To consider whether payment might have a negative effect on the loving relationship on which family childcare is based and therefore result in a loss of the 'warm glow' of satisfaction derived from care, parents and grandparents were asked if they thought payment for childcare would change their relationship. The implication from the case study households was that childcare of this type provided by family, especially grandparents, is based on deep-rooted emotional attachments that would be unlikely to be influenced by external factors such as payment. Edna (grandmother - case study household 1), said she thought she could keep the money 'separate' from the relationship, while Freda (grandmother - case study household 3) said, "...the money would be nice but it wouldn't change anything". From Barbara's perspective as a lone mother relying on her parents for childcare, it was again about feeling less guilty.

*Barbara:*

*No, I don't think anything could change the relationship I just think I would feel better that they were getting some money regularly.*

[Lone mother working full-time – case study household 1]



Where there were concerns, these were related to the 'formalising' (Qureshi 1990) of childcare through payment and one father, Peter, thought it might become more of a 'chore' for the childcarers. From the grandparents' perspective, Sylvia was concerned that payment could be seen as a possible way for parents to have more control, while Freda was concerned that it might be subject to abuse.

*Peter:*

*...I think if you started paying them then they would feel obligated to do it and it would be more of a chore*

[Father working full-time – case study household 3]

*Sylvia:* [when asked if she thought payment would affect her relationship with her daughter and son-in-law]

*Em...[pause]...I don't think so...but I think in some cases they might think well I'm paying you for this and you should be doing this. I think it could be dodgy in that area...*

[Grandmother providing part-time childcare – case study household]

*Freda:*

*I think it is probably open to abuse...I mean how can you prove that you have looked after...I mean anybody could say well I'm looking after them 5 days and they only have them 1 day. How can the Government prove it.*

[Grandmother – case study household 2]

However, the overall implications were that contrary to suggestions that care has to be based on either love or money<sup>41</sup>, parents in the childcare survey and in the case study households and the grandparents in the study felt that love and money could co-exist in the family childcare relationship. Furthermore, the data also questioned assumptions that carers feel it is offensive to talk about paying for care, as it appears that the main concern for the grandparents interviewed was *where* the money was coming from, as they would not want to place further financial constraints on parents. In fact, the data supported arguments that rather than damaging the relationship, payment could help childcarers overcome some of the financial consequences they face and therefore sustain their capacity to continue providing childcare support (Land 2002b, pp.13).

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<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion in relation to the 'cash for care' debate.



## Conclusions

As demonstrated in this chapter, the dilemma faced by parents when deciding who should look after their children is complicated by a number of factors. The data analysis from the childcare survey, the focus groups and the case study households highlighted that many parents would prefer to remain childcare self-sufficient by eliminating or reducing the need for non-parental childcare through more flexible working arrangements. This was said to be particularly important for very young children who it was felt needed the closeness of parental care and important to parents who wanted to spend more time with their children.

For parents in the study who needed substitute childcare there was a strong preference for family members, confirmed by the quantitative data from the childcare survey. When this was explored in terms of the subjective experience of parents in the focus groups and case studies, it was clear that in meeting their socio-cultural as well as economic requirements, some parents experienced an overlap between 'active choice' because of their strong preference for family childcare and 'force of circumstances' because of economic constraints. The duality of structure and agency influencing childcare selection was particularly apparent when mothers in the focus groups in Walker described how their values and beliefs about who should look after their children had sometimes taken precedence over financial considerations. The statistical evidence also confirmed a greater preference for family childcare in Walker and these data suggest that culturally defined preferences may be more deeply entrenched in this disadvantaged area.

The data also provide further evidence to support theories of the nature of care which have highlighted the importance of the person providing it (Himmelweit 1995). The parents described the need for a 'substitute' parent and sometimes a 'substitute' home for their children and it was felt that the emotional, as well as physical, aspects of care they were looking for were best provided by close family, especially a grandmother. For mothers struggling with their identities as mothers and workers, it appeared that replacing a mother's care with a morally and socially acceptable alternative such as a grandmother, helped reduce the anxiety and guilt they felt leaving their children. This adds further empirical evidence to support theories of 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards 1999) and 'purposeful choice' (Folbre 1994) to more accurately describe household decision making and the role of social well-being within this process, especially as this relates to the care of childcare and the choice of childcarer.



However, as apparent from the focus groups and case study interviews, despite the positive aspects of family childcare, it was not without its problems. The parents felt guilty because of the physical demands and constraints of childcare, especially on older grandparents. Linked to this, parents in the childcare survey were in favour of paying family members for childcare and when this was explored in the case study households, parents said this would ease the guilt they felt. However, grandparents in the case study households were only in support of payment as long as this was not coming directly from parents. There were implications that this was connected to the social and economic consequences they faced when providing regular childcare. Considering the combined factors of parental guilt and the constraints of childcare on grandparents, there is potential for conflict or tension within the family relationship. As the impact of family childcare on family relationships is a particularly under-researched area, it was important to explore this as a separate area of analysis, best observed at the household level from the perspectives of parents and grandparents. The following chapter looks exclusively at the family childcare relationship by considering family duty and obligation, normative expectation and consensus, and notions of legitimacy when negotiating family support.



## **Chapter 7: The family childcare relationship**

Through data presented in the previous chapters, it has been possible to gain a more rounded understanding of why many parents might prefer 'family childcare' in particular to other forms of childcare in terms of safety and security, reliability, and emotional closeness, as well as its economic benefits since it is most often unpaid. However, the data also revealed less positive aspects of family childcare such as the dilemma faced by guilt ridden parents concerned about the demands childcare places on the lives of the mainly grandparents who provide it. From the grandparents' perspective, there are further areas to explore in relation to the struggle they face as they attempt to reconcile their devotion to their own children and grandchildren and the constraints of regular childcare responsibilities. Therefore, an important yet often overlooked consequence of family childcare is the affect of sustained and intensive childcare support on family relationships.

In this chapter, the aim is to 'look inside the household' to explore family childcare more closely from the perspectives of parents who rely on it and the grandparents who provide it by presenting data produced from in-depth interviews with entire households. There are three case study households, each offering specific insight into the vital role of family childcare in overall household provisioning. However, in particular, this approach also provides the opportunity to explore in more detail important themes in respect to intergenerational family relationships by firstly comparing how each family responded to family obligation and duty considering concepts of negotiated commitments and conditional or 'procedural' consensus based on notions of 'legitimacy' (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999). It also allows exploration of the 'give and take' aspects of reciprocity (Arthur et al. 2003) and the role it plays in negotiations about family support. Finally, it permits a more in-depth analysis of the tension between change and continuity in intergenerational relations, especially how transmitted values and beliefs are adapted over time as each generation "...seeks to make its own mark" (Brannen 2003, pp.1), highlighting the potential for conflict and disagreement among families as differences in values and standards emerge.



The chapter is structured by focusing on each selected case study household<sup>1</sup> in turn, providing a childcare relationship history while exploring the themes described above. The analysis draws on aspects of Julia Brannen's proposed typology of intergenerational relations as a useful descriptive framework to explore the reproduction of 'family systems'<sup>2</sup>. Case study household one presents the experiences of a lone mother trying to provide economic and emotional security for her young son, both of which she felt could only be achieved through family childcare which is provided within a 'traditional solidaristic' family system. 'Incorporation of difference' best describes the second case study household with two parents working shifts where formal childcare was not an option for their non-standard working hours calling for innovative solutions in terms of early childcare arrangements, with childcare becoming more manageable as family members became available. Relationships in the last case study household were the most strained, with a more 'differentiated' family system and this case was selected to provide an example of the resentment that can result when, despite mixed feelings of guilt and obligation, family members place strict limitations on the amount of childcare they are prepared to provide.

The section that follows the individual case study analysis compares family childcare experiences to reflect on the various ways in which the families coped with the high levels of expectation and obligation, looking at the negative as well as the positive effect this had on their intergenerational relations. In particular, this discussion considers how, even in the most traditional families, obligation and duty are fluid concepts where levels of commitment are negotiated and conditional (Finch and Mason 1993). Using these three examples of family childcare, the discussion then goes on to consider the consequences in the short and long term when ordinary everyday disagreements, which are commonplace in most families, become exacerbated by the amount and intensity of childcare support required to allow parents to work, placing a strain on family relationships.

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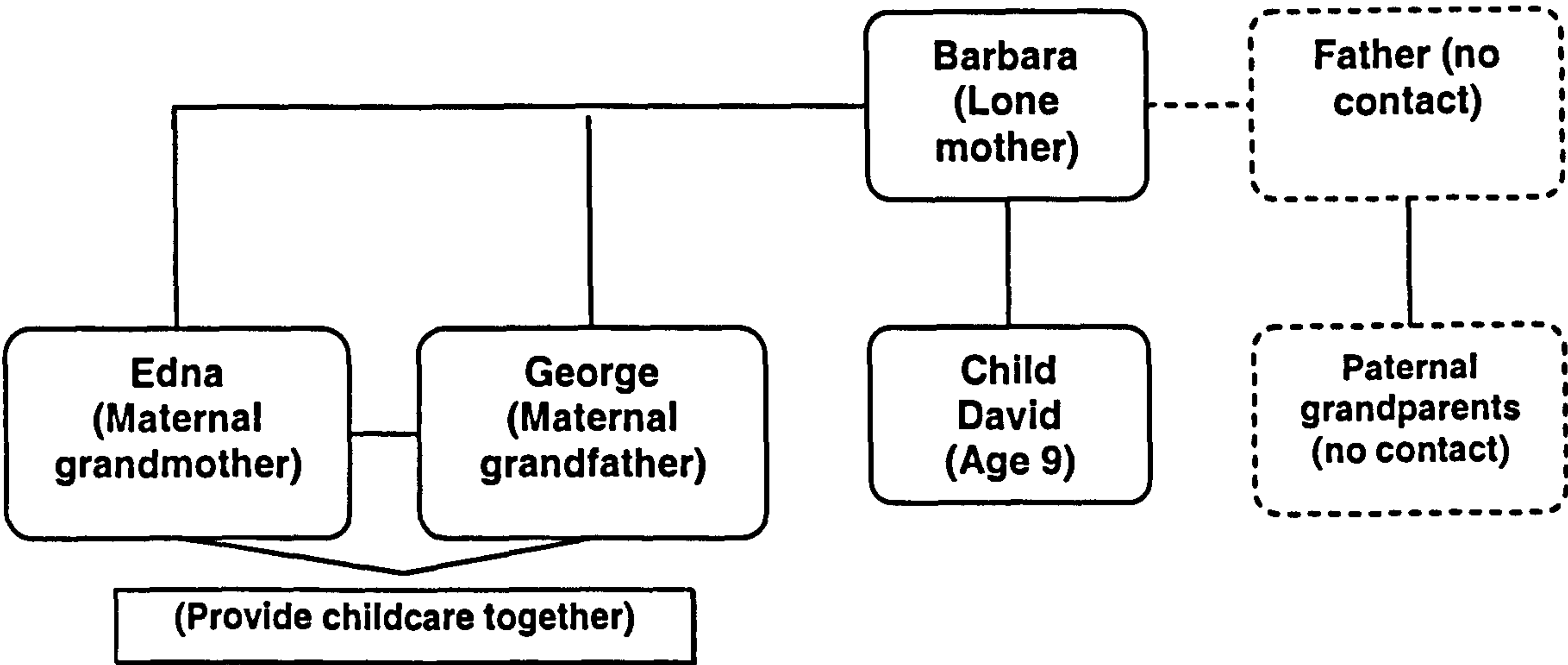
<sup>1</sup> As one parent in each case study household had taken part in the initial childcare survey detailed information was available about work and childcare arrangements making it possible to select households based on particularity of circumstances. To remind the reader, in each case study household all adults who were involved in childcare were interviewed. Children were not interviewed.

<sup>2</sup> The categories proposed are summarised as follows: **traditional solidaristic** to describe families with a strong sense of family obligation and reciprocity remaining geographically and emotionally close; **Incorporation of difference** where families stay emotionally close, provide considerable functional support, but are more innovative in response to changing patterns of work and care; **differentiated** where families provide less functional support and a less balanced reciprocity with clear differences in values; and **reparation in estrangement** to describe relations based on a cycle of transmission of negativity between generations creating resentment about the lack of emotional and material support (Brannen 2003).



Case study household 1: “...that’s what families should do”<sup>3</sup>

Figure 7.1 – Family childcare relationship – Case study household 1



In the first case study household (figure 7.1), interviews were carried out with the lone mother Barbara (aged 40) and the maternal grandparents, Edna (aged 68) and George (aged 71) who provided childcare on a regular basis for Barbara’s only child, David (aged 9). At some point during the interviews, all three members described their family as ‘really close’ and this referred not only to geographical proximity but also emotional and social closeness. The quote above, from the grandmother of the household, encapsulates the spirit of this family relationship based on a very strong sense of family obligation and reciprocity. Family intergenerational relations of this type, rooted in well established and mutually accepted transmitted habits and practices, have been described as ‘traditional solidaristic’ (Brannen 2003) and it was clear during the interviews that Barbara and her parents were committed to this approach to family relationships. In fact, this family exhibited remarkable solidarity, especially in times of financial hardship when the provision of complementary childcare became vital to Barbara’s economic survival and to her son’s well-being in terms of emotional stability and security. Traditional values and beliefs about families ‘sticking together’ took priority over all other factors.

<sup>3</sup> This quote is from transcript of the interview with maternal grandmother and grandfather. It was said by the grandmother.



*Edna:*

*It was strange you know [starting again with a new baby]... but you had to do it because she had to work. Other than that she would have lost the house. She didn't want to come back home she didn't want to sort of start all over again back home living with her parents again. So we all just stuck in...I mean it was hard, getting up at 6:30am every morning can be tiring but once you're up you are fine...  
...But you just get on with it and it just passes...and when you are put in that situation when you've got to help them really. You can't really say "well I've brought mine up so it's up to you to fend for yourself" you can't do that. You feel it's your responsibility.*

*Interviewer:*

*Why did you feel it was your responsibility?*

*Edna:*

*Because that's what families should do.*

Barbara and her parents lived in the Walker ward of Newcastle upon Tyne, which represents the lower social class ward in the study and is an area with problems of social deprivation, social disorder and poor levels of educational attainment. Barbara had lived in this ward all of her life, as had her parents. In fact, Edna and George were still living in the house where Edna grew up which was a council house that they had lived in with Edna's parents and was transferred to them when her parents passed away. Edna and George had lived in this ward long enough to remember what it was like before the severe social problems took hold, when Walker was one of the 'shipbuilding' working class communities of Newcastle and George himself had worked as a shipbuilder as had Barbara's ex-husband. Edna and George discussed their concern at the changes in the area where they now felt unable to let even their older grandchildren go to the park alone<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The extent of their concern was particularly evident when, at the end of the interview (which was carried out at 10:00am in the morning), Edna insisted that, for my safety, George walk with me to the local bus stop, despite the fact that I explained I was familiar with the area as I had relatives living there.



Despite living in a disadvantaged area, Edna and George had been very keen for their children to 'get on' in life and work was central to their core family values. Edna and George were proud of their hard working family, including Barbara's brothers and sisters who Edna said had all "...*done well for themselves*". Furthermore, these values had also been transferred to other generations as Edna and George's older grandchildren were studying at university at the time of the study, which again was a great source of family pride. While Edna had been a stay-at-home mother until her youngest child was aged 11 (when she took a part-time cleaning job), and George had been a traditional male breadwinner, they both accepted that Barbara enjoyed her job and understood when she said she wanted to continue to work after David was born. This was despite the fact that Barbara could have stopped working as her then husband was working in a reasonable well-paid full-time job. Therefore, when Barbara was pregnant with David, her parents offered to look after the baby on a part-time basis, which they had discussed previously and it was something that Edna and George had expected to do as part of extended family support.

*Interviewer:*

*Had they offered to look after the baby when you got pregnant?*

*Barbara:*

*Yes...it was always offered. When thinking back we had talked about it in the past and they said not full-time but we would certainly help out if you were only working part-time and I had said well I would only go back part-time anyway because I didn't think it was fair either on them or the baby you can't give your all...something has to give either work or family you know.*

Edna and George had always struggled to make ends meet and they understood financial hardship as George had had to retire in his mid 50s from his physically demanding manual job due to ill health and Edna had to leave her job because of problems with arthritis. Therefore, the importance and value of money in terms of basic economic survival was something with which Barbara had grown up.



It was because of this that she was determined to contribute to the distribution of financial resources in exchange for childcare provided by her parents<sup>5</sup> and in spite of their protests, Barbara had paid her parents £25 per week for childcare when she first returned to work on a part-time basis when David was six months old. Barbara said she could see how this money benefited her parents who were living on a low state pension and she felt positive about helping them in return for the support they provided.

*Barbara:*

*I did used to pay my mam when I went back to work, I did give her something which she didn't want to take but I said no, you are helping us out and it helped them out as well giving them money...my mam didn't think you should be paid for looking after your grandson...she said it's your grandson for God's sake and if you can't look after him and help your family what can you do. But I think it helped because even though they didn't want it I could see how it benefited them...you know so I felt as though I was helping them and they were helping me.*

Unfortunately, circumstances changed dramatically when David was just nine months old and without any warning, Barbara's husband left her and the baby. At this stage, with no financial or emotional support from her ex-husband, Barbara could have become one of the many unfortunate lone mothers who find it too difficult to cope with childcare and work. However, although they had been initially concerned about the hard work and commitment of full-time childcare, Edna and George immediately offered to look after David on a full-time basis to allow Barbara to increase her hours. Therefore, out of financial necessity in order to pay her mortgage and keep her house, Barbara began working full-time hours. Regrettably, despite the fact that Barbara had felt very strongly about paying her parents for childcare to recognise what she saw as a two-way process of mutual support and reciprocity, she had to stop payments once she was on her own as she could no longer afford it.

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<sup>5</sup> Hilary Land (2002b) has pointed out that, among working class families in Britain, there is a long tradition of employed mothers paying their mothers or other relatives for childcare as way of maximising earnings and resources within low income families across households.



*Barbara:*

*But once we had split up I just couldn't afford it and my mam certainly didn't ask for it. She said no you keep that money you know. It was only £25 a week but it was £100 a month they were getting...I felt bad but obviously I couldn't afford to pay it once I was on my own.*

Looking at this change from Edna and George's perspective, there was no hesitation when they decided to provide this extra support for Barbara. In theoretical terms, this was a 'patterned change' (Finch 1989) in circumstances that completely altered the nature of the initial negotiated and conditional family commitment of the part-time childcare Edna and George had said they were prepared to offer. In relation to 'procedural consensus' (Finch and Mason 1999), in their view this was most definitely a genuine and legitimate reason for reconsidering the original arrangement as they viewed Barbara's need for family support as a priority, especially as she had become a lone parent. Once again, the collective needs of the household took precedence over individual needs or concerns.

*Edna:*

*Oh yes that [helping out] has been important...she [Barbara] was in such a position and she would have had to give her job up and it's a job that she loves and she couldn't do without work. You need the work to survive don't you...it's all right saying you can live on social security but you can't keep your own house on social security.*

*...*

*Because she was on her own as well...I've looked after the others but they were not as important. I mean my other daughter had a husband who was working and it was just like a bit of extra money and she was just working part-time. But it was a case that Barbara had this job and we had to chip in.*



At the time of the study Edna and George were still extremely involved in David's care although he was then nine years old. They looked after him before and after school as Barbara dropped him off with them at 7:15am in the morning and picked him up at 5:00pm. Edna and George also looked after him during the school holidays. In fact, David attended a primary school near his grandparents rather than the school near his own home to make before and after school childcare more manageable.

Edna and George relied exclusively on state benefits for their income and Barbara, as a working lone parent, was in receipt of Working Family Tax Credit at the time of study. Therefore, had she been using registered, formal childcare, she could have claimed Childcare Tax Credit to help with the costs of before and after school care and for holiday clubs. However, as David was 'happy' with his grandparents and his grandparents remained committed to his care, Barbara had not even considered registered childcare because she felt strongly that David needed the consistency and security of family members looking after him, especially as he was from a one-parent household.

*Barbara:*

*Well I suppose a main thing is that there has been continuity all the way...he hasn't been passed from pillar to post where some are passed to various neighbours or childminders. I think he has had enough upheaval with me and his dad splitting up and I think that at least it [his childcare] has been all the way through...he knows that if I wasn't there then it was nanna and granddad.*

This recognition of the importance of family members in providing much more than physical care, reiterates the strong emotional connections within this family. However, there was also a further aspect of the regular family childcare relationship that Barbara and her parent's saw as crucial to David's well-being. This was the close relationship between David and his grandfather, who had provided a positive and supportive male role model throughout David's early years. This was seen as especially important to the family as David had no contact with his own father. From Barbara's perspective, spending time with his grandfather had helped shape David's character and personality and she saw this as an extremely positive outcome of the long-term childcare relationship.



**Barbara:**

*I think he [David] got life experience you know. They didn't do like...I mean if he had been at a proper nursery he might have been doing more skills with other children and involved in baking cookies and things like that and painting pictures which my mam and dad didn't do. But he can sit and talk to anybody and he can talk to older people...My dad will take him to different people's houses and he goes shopping with them. I think its life experiences...he can sit and talk about life...he'll say I'll ask granddad because granddad will know that won't he. So they [David and his grandfather] sit and have chats about all sorts of things...like life's knowledge that he wouldn't have got that from a nursery.*

For George, he particularly valued his relationship with David as he admitted that having worked very long hours when his own children were small, he felt he had 'missed out' on them growing up. This was his second chance and he said he had really enjoyed his time with David. In fact, both Edna and George viewed themselves as instrumental in the 'bringing up' of David and were very proud to share in the success of raising a bright, sociable and responsible boy who was clearly a credit to the family.

**George:**

*Well I used to help with my own kids when I could but I have seen more of the grandchildren than I did with them...I was working 12 hours a day every day. Oh yes...I've really enjoyed it.*

**Interviewer:**

*What are things you have liked best about it?*

**George:**

*Well daft things really...I never saw my own kids...so bringing up David has been a good laugh...I think he has learned quite a bit as well. He knows how to talk to people and you would never be embarrassed taking him out never.*



*Edna:*

*He has been with adults you see from being little...which is a shame in one way but he was still a good mixer with other children and things.*

*George:*

*Well we taught him to share and not to fight...everyone thinks the world of David.*

Although Barbara had had to stop paying her parents in cash for the childcare they provided, there remained a clear 'internal regime of reciprocity' (Arthur et al. 2003) and this was important to Barbara and very much appreciated by her parents. In fact, within this family mutual support and resource sharing was a 'normal' part of their everyday lives. Therefore, while Barbara's parents supported her with childcare, she was able to repay them in other ways by taking them for their shopping every week or taking them on social outings and the occasional holiday.

*Edna:*

*I mean they are good to you in other ways. I mean if you go out...they all have cars...and if they take us out it doesn't cost us anything for a meal or anything like that or to the cinema or theatre something like that they won't take anything. They pay us in other ways.*

While there was a strong sense of solidarity within this family, there were also areas of potential tension over intergenerational differences in standards and values. Barbara recognised that her parents were a bit "...stuck in their ways" as she put it, and this had caused some concern in the early years when they were looking after David as they had different views about discipline in terms of what David was, or was not, allowed to do. However, while Barbara acknowledged that her approach to looking after David might have been different had she been at home with him, she had never felt able to seriously challenge her parents or ask them to do things 'her way'.



**Barbara:**

*...I don't sort of feel that I can...like if my mam and dad did something I didn't agree with I wouldn't criticise them for it because I think well he's there and he's their responsibility and maybe I would have let him do such and such and they haven't but I would never criticise them...for example when it comes to things like a nice summer day but they won't go anywhere because they couldn't be bothered and I'll say well why didn't you take him to the park and they say well why should we have...they have their reasons, they are too old, too tired and couldn't be bothered...they are happy to stay in the house.*

*...*

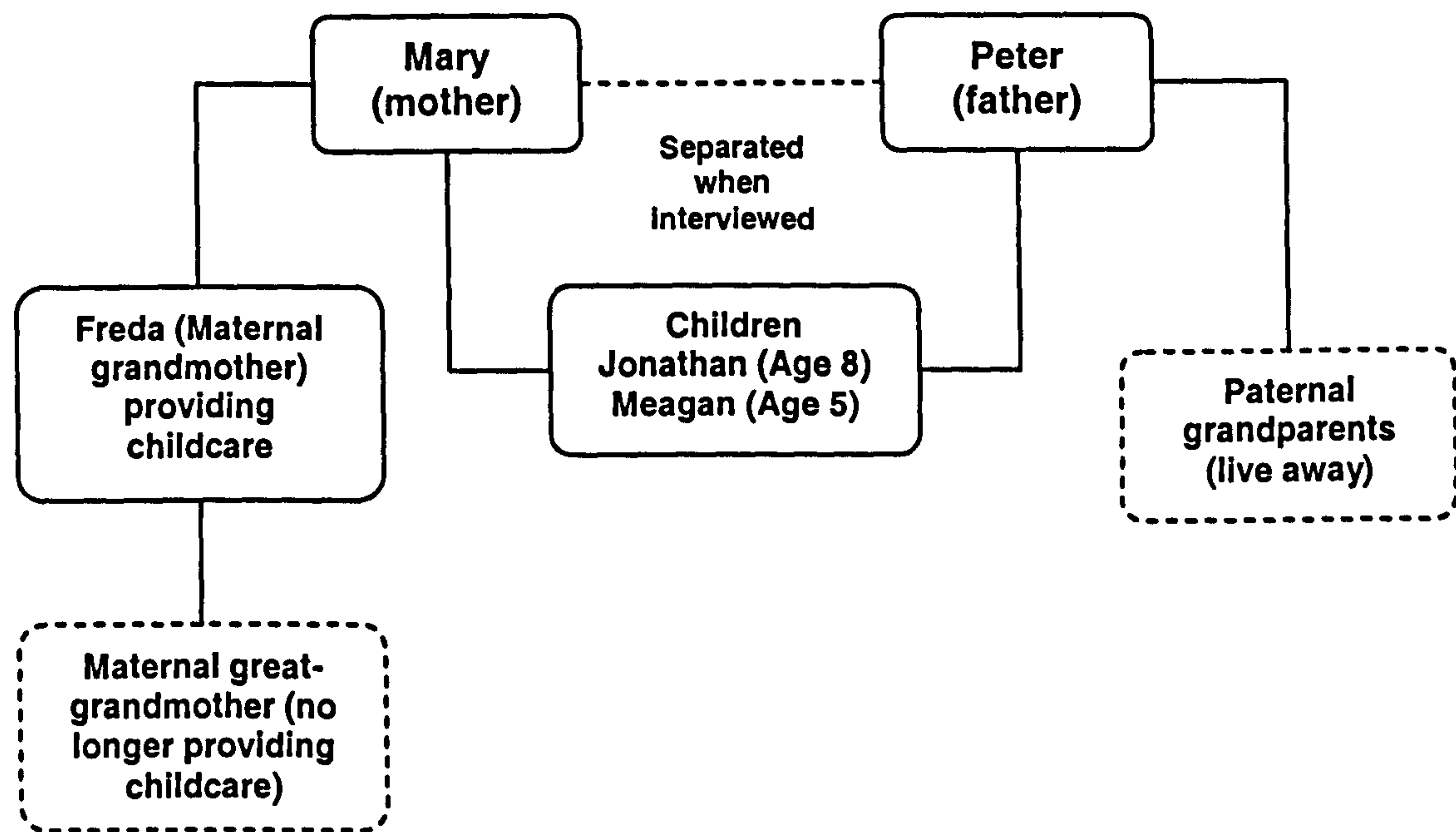
*She didn't do anything involved in other children and I did think he was missing out on that. But I wouldn't criticise her... I'm not saying they could have done more but they could have maybe gone out a bit more but I would never have said that to them because I was very appreciative of what they were doing and it was a minor criticism if anything.*

As illustrated in the extract above, in Barbara's case the gratitude she felt for the support her parents provided was the overriding factor and prevented any confrontation that might lead to conflict. Therefore, Barbara accepted her parent's 'ways', although she disagreed with some of their practices, as she recognised that these were "...minor criticisms" compared to what she viewed as the positive aspects of family childcare. In general, the intergenerational relations had remained supportive making it possible for this family to manage the intensity of full-time family childcare through mutual 'give and take'.



Case study household 2: “...with us it just evolved ”<sup>6</sup>

Figure 7.2 - Family childcare relationship – Case study household 2



In the second case study household (figure 7.2), the father Peter (aged 40), the mother Mary (aged 35) and the maternal grandmother Freda (aged 58) were interviewed<sup>7</sup> and the first comparison to be made is that members of this household were less traditional and more flexible in terms of their approach to all aspects of work, care and family obligation. Therefore, far from expecting family support, when the children were first born the parents had remained childcare self-sufficient even though this meant challenging traditional gender roles by the father leaving work to become main carer. However, as the opportunities arose and family members became available, the childcare relationship ‘evolved’, as described by the mother of the household in the quote above. Julia Brannen has described these less defined patterns of intergenerational relationships as ‘incorporation of difference’ (Brannen 2003) to convey the readiness of family members to accept different and innovative practices to work and care. Nevertheless, despite having a more fluid and responsive, rather than a planned or expected, approach to family obligation the extended family had remained emotionally close.

<sup>6</sup> This quote was taken from the transcript of the interview with the mother, Mary.

<sup>7</sup> Mary’s own grandmother (children’s great-grandmother) had previously contributed to childcare but as she was no longer able to look after the children, she was not interviewed.



In the original childcare survey, Peter was the respondent and at that time he was a home-owner, living in the Dene ward with the Mary and their two children, Jonathan (then aged 7) and Meagan (then aged 4). Peter and Mary both worked shifts including early mornings, evenings, nightshifts and weekend work. These non-standard hours meant they were unable to use formal childcare and therefore relied on an extremely complex 'childcare jigsaw' (Wheelock and Jones 2002). This involved working around shiftwork rotas and additional childcare support from Mary's mother Freda and at that time some occasional 'back-up' childcare from Mary's own grandmother (the children's great-grandmother), who was aged 79. This placed an enormous strain on the family and during the initial survey interview Peter had described the stress and conflict caused by childcare problems which had especially affected the relationship between himself and his wife. By the time of the case study interviews things had changed considerably and although childcare had become less complicated (both children were then in full-time school), Peter and Mary's relationship had seriously deteriorated and they were living apart<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, when the case study household members were interviewed, there was a three-way process of household provisioning with individual contributions from the non-resident father, the mother and the maternal grandmother Freda, who lived alone (divorced) and provided before and after school care and holiday care.

As all of Peter's family lived in another part of the country, he and Mary were extremely thankful that Freda was now available to provide childcare support, something she was able to do as she had taken early retirement because of ill health, having worked all of her life in a job she loved. While Freda and Mary were originally from Newcastle the family had lived scattered in different areas of the country for a number of years. However, when the children were aged four and two, Peter and Mary moved back to the Northeast and as Freda had retired, she also moved back to be near the family. Despite the lack of geographical proximity over the years, the family had remained socially and emotionally close and Freda in particular said she felt a strong sense of family obligation to support her daughter.

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<sup>8</sup> During the case study interview with Peter, he confirmed that, in his opinion, the '*...constant build up*' of childcare problems had contributed to the marriage breakdown.



However, this family obligation was definitely conditional in terms of Freda's own needs and aspirations and she was very clear that if she had been able to continue working she would never have given up her job to look after the children. Her career had been very important to her and it was only because she was no longer able to work that she was both available and prepared to provide the considerable and much needed childcare support. Nevertheless, even though she was now very pleased to be able to help her daughter and her family, she also had her own active lifestyle and other interests to consider. Therefore, family obligation had to incorporate Freda's needs as part of a balanced approach to negotiated commitments.

*Freda:*

*Well I had a professional job and there was no way that I would have given that up for childcare...I would have preferred to have paid for a childminder myself...I loved my job and I wouldn't have gone that far because I would have thought they should have arranged something.*

*Interviewer:*

*Do you think grandparents should give up work to provide childcare?*

*Freda:*

*Well I think a lot of people would say well that's what grandparents are for...you always get this thrown at you...I don't think my daughter would have expected that but, I feel guilty for example, going away on holiday because I do like my holidays and think well I'm leaving her in the lurch. So I think in a way you do feel obligated...well not really obligated but you just want to help out.*

From Mary's perspective, she also loved her job and valued her career. Therefore, she respected and understood that her mother needed her own life and independence and had never expected that her mother should provide childcare. The family childcare support had not been previously discussed or pre-arranged and instead it had 'evolved' as a response to convenience of circumstances rather than an expectation or a strict notion of family obligation or duty.



*Interviewer:*

*How was it that your mother started looking after the children?*

*Mary:*

*Well now...she was living close then and there was nothing ever said. To be honest I never used to ask her to babysit and I never felt as if I should put upon her but as time has gone on I think now she sees the kids as her kids really. She loves to do it now.*

*Interviewer:*

*I was just wondering if it was ever seen as a family expectation...?*

*Mary:*

*No...I know some families do don't they. No...with us it just evolved and now she wants it and expects it and says when can I have them.*

Freda also confirmed that the family childcare relationship had brought her closer to the children and to her daughter. For that reason, although she had limits to the support she was prepared to provide because she found it tiring and constraining on her time, Freda valued the time with her grandchildren.

*Freda:*

*I don't mind one or two days but when its every day it is just too much. Physically I can't do it...the upheaval is quite traumatic. I mean in a nice way...But I need to get back to the quietness before I can cope*

*....Well I find I do bond more with these two [Mary's children] more than the other two [other grandchildren]...I think it brings you closer to the children because I see more of them.*

*Interviewer:*

*What about your relationship with Mary, has that changed?*

*Freda:*

*Definitely...I think we have got closer together...yes it has and we talk about the children and I find that she visits and pops by a lot more so we have got closer.*



In considering the tension and conflict within the marriage, it appeared that the mismatch in views about family obligation between Peter and Mary were contributing factors. While Peter was more accepting of less gendered approaches to work and care, his views on family obligation were more traditional in terms of what should be expected of family members. Mary said she felt extremely guilty asking her mother for so much childcare support. Consequently, she avoided asking her where possible and often left it to the last minute<sup>9</sup>. This frustrated Peter, but most importantly Mary's reluctance to ask her mother for help with the children conflicted with Peter's views about family duty and obligation. As a result, this has caused arguments and disagreements between Peter and Mary, as Peter could not understand why Mary would feel guilty asking her own mother. As discussed in the previous chapter, Peter viewed grandmother help as *"...the natural order of things."*

*Peter:*

*Well I think that's [helping out with grandchildren] what grandmothers are for to be honest...I think it comes back to when I was a kid myself we never went to childminders. I mean I know it was 30 or 40 years ago when I come into the world but there was none of this childminder. I mean we just took it for granted that we would be with our parents or our grandma or one of the aunties, uncles or brothers. I mean I come from a large family so I was always looked after by my family. It was just always family.*

*Interviewer:*

*Did you expect Mary's family to help with childcare?*

*Peter:*

*Well I do to be honest. I expect her [Mary's mother] to...I mean if my mother...if we lived near my mother I know for a fact I would just have to pick up the phone and she would be there. I wouldn't even...well Mary sometimes says well we take advantage too much and I say well how can you be taking advantage when she's the kid's grandma. I don't see it as taking advantage I see it as the natural order of things.*

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<sup>9</sup> This had caused problems in the past as Mary's mother resented not being given sufficient notice to arrange her schedule (see below for discussion of intergenerational tensions and conflicts within this family).



While Peter held traditional views about family obligation, the family was especially innovative in 'incorporating difference' in terms of gender roles as, in response to financial circumstances, Peter had spent two years after Meagan's birth (the second child) at home as the main carer. At this time, Peter and Mary were living away from all family members and having had a bad experience with formal childcare when their son was first born where they felt he had been neglected and poorly cared for by a childminder, they felt their only option was for one of them to stay home. The decision to have Peter stay home was based mainly on economic rationality, although Peter's desire to spend more time with his children was also a contributing factor as he recognised that continuing to work the very long hours in hospitality would mean he would never see the children. Therefore, not only was this the best financial decision, for Peter and Mary it was also the best moral decision and Peter in particular said he felt it had improved his quality of life.

*Peter:*

*When Meagan was born we both sat down and took the decision that I would go off work for 18months. Just over...nearly 2 years I actually gave up my job...at the time Mary could earn more than me so she went back to work and I stayed at home with the kids...it was alright actually because Mary enjoyed going to work and I loved being home with the kids. ...well I've never been or thought I'm the hunter-gatherer and I've got to go out and earn the money. We always decided that whoever could earn more...we have just done what was best for all of us at the time...*

*...plus when I was working split shifts so starting work at 7:00am until lunchtime and then going back at 3:30pm until 10:00pm at night. That was 6 days a week and when I got promoted I was expected to work from 7:00am until 10:00pm 7 days a week...there was no way...you just can't inflict those sort of hours on the family and Mary would never have been able to cope. I wouldn't have been able to see the kids and they would have suffered so I just decided to give up work for 2 years...I'll be honest with you I'm a better person for doing that...well I just think it is the best thing you could ever do is stay at home and spend time with the kids. I had more of an education in those 2 years than I ever had in life. They teach you so much kids.*



Ironically, and disturbingly, the problems with childcare that Peter said, in his opinion, had been a contributing factor in the marriage break-up had become easier to manage since Peter and Mary had separated, as they were no longer trying to coordinate time together as a family. As they now had a co-parenting arrangement whereby the children stayed with each parent for a part of the week, Peter said that he and Mary were more relaxed as they also had more time to themselves. This was also easier on Mary's mother, who had previously looked after the children during school holidays whereas now Peter and Mary took separate holidays to care for the children. Peter also thought they were better off financially.

*Peter:*

*Well we find now that we are actually separated the summer holidays are less of a stress because I take the first two weeks of August and Mary takes the second two weeks of August...what we tend to do is one week in 7 I have one weekend to myself...then the next time I have a long weekend which is Sat, Sun, Mon and Tues and I have the kids for the 4 days and then Mary has the whole weekend to do exactly what she wants...*

*...And even now that we are separated and it sounds ludicrous to say but even on the financial side of it we are both far better off now being single than when we were together...*

Turning now to issues of conflict and tension within the intergenerational relationships, there were childcare related disagreements between Mary and Freda and Mary saw this as a 'natural' consequence of the high level of support with childcare her mother provided and expected that she would have more 'input' to how the children were brought up. However, Mary felt they were able to manage their disagreements without too many problems and to avoid confrontation Mary was prepared to overlook differences in values and standards as she appreciated the support her mother provided.

*Mary:*

*"...well where do you draw the line when you ask them to babysit as often as I do... more than the average. Mam will have her say if she doesn't agree with something she'll have her say but no...its fine, its not a problem. She has a good input into them.*



Similarly, Freda preferred to avoid conflict and she said mainly she tried to, *"...go along with the way Mary feels..."* although sometimes she found this difficult. In particular, when Mary and Peter were together there were areas of their childcare management with which Freda disagreed and she had been resentful that there were times when they did not give her enough time to allow her to arrange her other responsibilities. However, generally Freda said she rarely voiced her concerns as they had had a falling out previously and this had upset the family. This was also when Mary and Peter were still together and Freda had been annoyed that they had not planned their holiday leave more efficiently so they could be off to look after the children. Instead, they used up their own holiday leave by taking time off during school term-time and therefore Freda had had to take care of the children for very long days during the school holidays. This also interfered with Freda's holiday plans to the point where she felt guilty when booking holidays, always mindful of her responsibilities for childcare. When interviewed Freda said she now considered her own needs first and while she was prepared to offer considerable support to her daughter, she also recognised the importance of living her own life.

*Freda:*

*...So I started having my own life and because I had an empty diary I would fill it with you know whatever...but then of course they would come last minute and say would you have them and that really does bug me. You know I would rather know in advance and plan around helping.*

*...I never said anything and if I did I tried to say it in a nice way...So of course I would be a bit resentful because I would think well why couldn't they take their holidays in the school holidays there was no reason for them to take it at other times and I would have them from early morning all day and I found that really tiring and really hard. If it was unavoidable I would do it no problem but when things...because I'm always one for planning ahead and being organised and I couldn't believe it. But now they have started to get the message and at one time thinking of going on holiday and I would think oh well I've got the children...but now I think well its up to Mary to organise the school holidays and if I'm not there...I do just go on holiday and give her plenty of warning so now she sort of covers the holidays because I don't mind one or two days but when its every day it is just too much.*



It was interesting when talking to Freda that although in the extract above she admitted to being a “...*bit resentful*”, this was clearly difficult for her to admit as she was devoted to her grandchildren and it seemed she did not want anyone to think otherwise. She had tried very hard to hide her resentment from the family and it was as if she felt her love for her grandchildren was being called into question by admitting that childcare responsibilities constrained her life and sometimes caused problems. Therefore, despite the fact that there had been previous conflict because of family childcare, both Freda and Mary were more inclined to downplay these problems for the sake of their relationship.

In terms of differences in values and standards, Mary and Freda had conflicting views in some areas, especially in relation to perceptions of ‘need’. For Mary she felt that working was necessary to provide her children with a ‘certain standard of living’ based on access to material goods. In contrast, Freda expressed her concern about the ‘rat-race of consumerism’ that people find themselves drawn into and while she thought it was important for women to work in terms of their personal identities, she also thought that people had lost a sense of perspective about the important things in life such as spending time with their children.

*Mary:*

*You have to work in order to provide a certain standard of living really and at the end of the day there are times they haven’t wanted me to go to work...but I said to them would you rather I gave up work and we lived somewhere else and not have the nice holidays or do you want me to work and have all we’ve got. And of course they always say they like what they have..*

*Freda:*

*I do think it is important for women to have something but possibly part-time work... But you know a lot of people don’t need to go out to work but they do it for financial reasons but I think then you might gain one way but you are handing it out in another way really. I think people have to lower their expectations, get a smaller house, don’t get two cars or a brand new television...they are on the rat-race of consumerism and they just don’t know where to stop because everybody is saying you have to it and I think they are not stopping to think what is life all about... what children really want is your time.*



What was also interesting in this case study household was the lack of reciprocity in favour of the grandmother. While Peter said he sometimes did small jobs for Freda around the house, the main functional support came from Freda in the form of childcare and occasionally providing financial support to pay for holidays and treats. This was most likely related to Freda's independent lifestyle, as she was still very active and in fact was typical of a 'pivotal generation' (Brannen 2003) female family carer, providing care for her grandchildren, while also looking after her own elderly mother. Freda had her own car, was in relatively good health and was financially secure. Therefore, she had no immediate requirement for family support. For the time being, it was the intrinsic rewards that were important to Freda, such as the excitement she still felt when seeing her grandchildren<sup>10</sup> and the 'warm glow of satisfaction' in knowing that she was helping her family.

*Freda:*

*But I think really it's a good thing because if...like anything if the children are 'farmed out' to other people again it is dividing the families. I think this is a good thing if grandparents can do it.*

Therefore, despite the strain family childcare had placed on the family relationship in the past, Freda was positive about the part she was playing in keeping the family together and while she also felt strongly about maintaining her own interests, she was prepared to be flexible to help the family where possible. For Mary and Peter, while also recognising the potential problems associated with constant reliance on family members, they remained grateful to Freda for continued commitment to caring for the children even though this was negotiated and conditional.

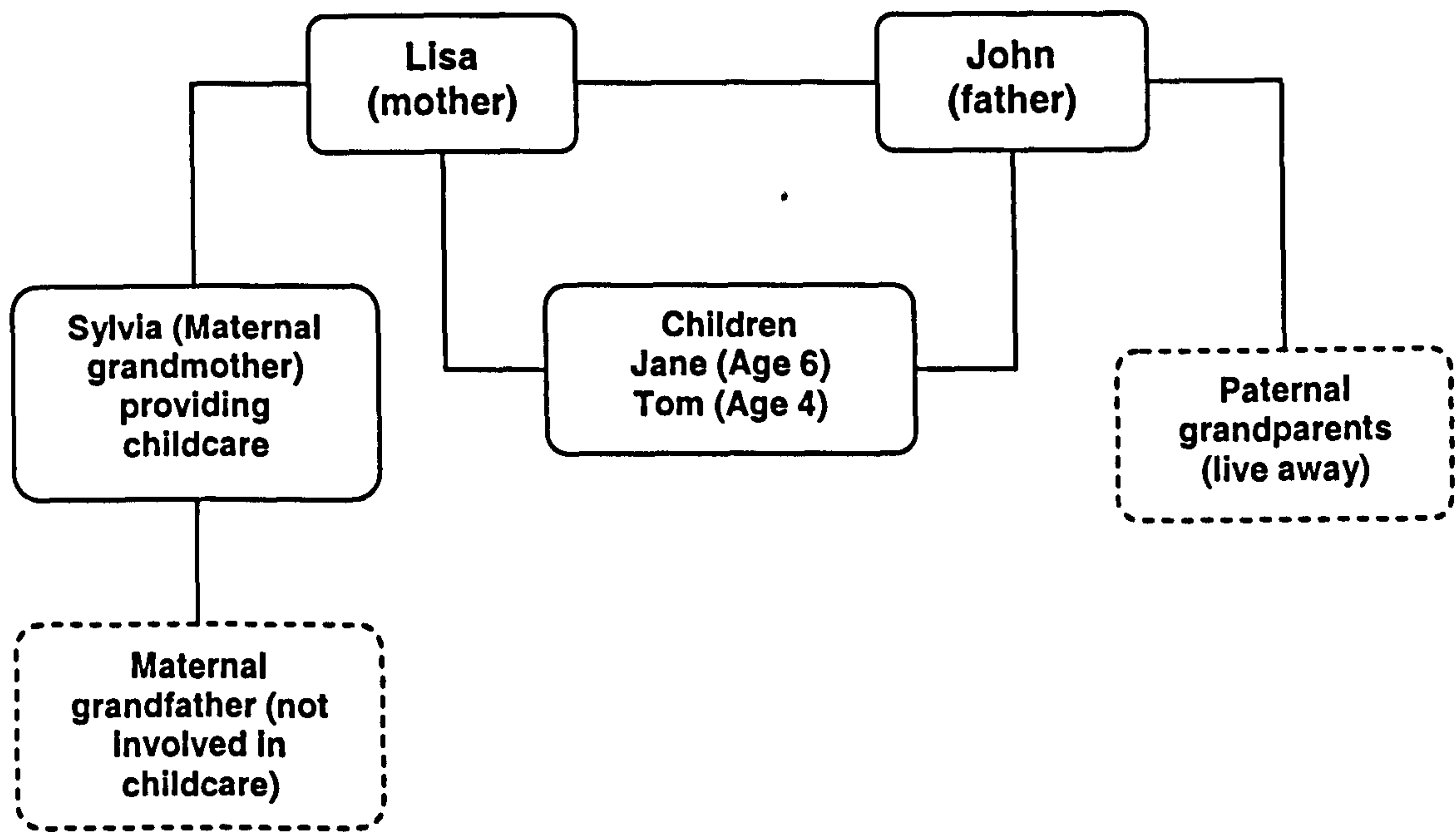
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<sup>10</sup> At the end of the interview when the tape was off, Freda admitted that she still got 'butterflies' when waiting to see the children – she described this feeling as “...like being in love”.



**Case study household 3: “...I feel they are quite lucky really”<sup>11</sup>**

**Figure 7.3 - Family childcare relationship – Case study household 3**



In the final case study household (figure 7.3), Interviews were carried out with the father John (age 38), the mother Lisa (age 37), and the maternal grandmother Sylvia (aged 61) who lived with her husband. Relationships between the members of this household provide an example of an emotionally close family who clearly wanted to support each other, but where relations had been considerably strained because of disagreements over family childcare, creating feelings of guilt, indebtedness and resentment. Intergenerational relations of this kind have been described as ‘differentiated’, categorised by clear differences in values and less commitment to functional support or to the idea that extended family should be main care providers (Brannen 2003). Therefore, while the grandmother in this case study household was committed to caring for her grandchildren, there were strict conditions in terms of the amount of childcare she provided and the reasons for which she was prepared to look after the children. She was also more forthcoming in expressing her dissatisfaction and resentment at the way in which childcare responsibilities constrained her life. As a result, she was keen that her family understood and appreciated the importance of her contribution for which she felt they should feel lucky, as illustrated by quote in the title above.

<sup>11</sup> This quote was taken from the transcript of the interview with the maternal grandmother.



There had been some geographical mobility within the family as John and Lisa had lived away for a couple of years. However, a change in circumstances prompted a move back to Newcastle and in Lisa's words, this proved to be "*...good timing*", as Lisa then found out she was pregnant with their first child (Jane). Lisa was therefore pleased to be living close to her mother at a time when she knew she would need help and support with a new baby. A few years later, they had a second child (Tom) and at the time of the case study interviews, Jane was aged six and Tom was aged four. Since they were born, both children had accessed a combination of a formal childcare (private day nursery) and complementary childcare provided by Sylvia who was the only family member available to provide support. All of John's family lived away and therefore Lisa and John relied on Sylvia to fill the childcare gaps to enable them both to work full-time, as, against her wishes, Lisa had had to return to work three months after the birth of both children because, as she said, "*...they desperately needed the money*".<sup>12</sup>

John and Lisa and their two children lived on the outskirts of Dene ward which represents the middle class area in the study and they were very typical of the most common type of household in this ward as two-parent, dual earners who owned their own home. Lisa worked full-time in a 9 to 5 job and, because of financial difficulties John was working two jobs and very long hours (55-60 per week) which involved evenings and weekend work. When Lisa first returned to work after Jane was born, she asked her mother to help with childcare. Sylvia had been a homemaker most of her married life and had only participated in paid work sporadically over the years and usually on a part-time basis. She was not working when Lisa asked her to help with childcare and she agreed to look after Jane for one full day per week. For the other four days, Jane was in a private day nursery which was a further strain on John and Lisa's already stretched finances.

Therefore, while Sylvia stated she strongly believed "*...families should stick together with support in this way*" the family obligation was conditional and negotiated from the outset. This came as no surprise to Lisa who had never expected that her mother would agree to provide childcare as she had made it quite clear in the past that she felt she had "*...done her time*" bringing up her own children. Although Lisa was somewhat resentful, she also understood her mother's point of view and said she would also be reluctant to provide childcare for her own grandchildren in the future.

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<sup>12</sup> See 'Work and childcare' section in Chapter 6 where Lisa's 'force of circumstances' is also discussed.



*Lisa:*

*...we knew we would have to put her in nursery anyway because I didn't think my mam would want to have her. But then my mam agreed to have her one day a week, so we had to find childcare... that's all my mam said at first, one day a week*

*...well she has always said that she did her time with us and she has always just been a housewife and she is used to her own time, doing her own thing.*

*...Well I wouldn't do it for Jane. I will have done my bit bringing them up so I do see my mam's point of view.*

John, on the other hand, was undecided about his views about family obligation. He also felt guilty having to rely on Sylvia, but at the same time thought the 'cycle' of family support had to be considered. As a result he had a greater appreciation of intergenerational reciprocity, which he had witnessed in his own family.

*Interviewer:*

*Do you think grandparents should be expected to provide childcare?*

*John:*

*No not particularly. Well yes and no, I don't know. To a degree. I don't think you should rely on them because they've got a life as well and they have brought up their children but their parents helped them ...well it goes round in circles...Yes...we had my grandma and my granddad they did a lot for us.*

From Sylvia's perspective, she was devoted to her grandchildren who she described as, "...the love of her life". However, she felt strongly that full-time childcare was too much because she had to consider her own needs and the needs of her husband. While standing firmly by her decision, refusing to provide more childcare had caused Sylvia anguish and guilt as her perception was that Lisa expected her support and that she was letting her daughter down as she knew this meant John and Lisa would have to pay for a nursery. Nevertheless, despite the guilt Sylvia's desire to continue with her own life and interests and not be 'tied down' by constant childcare responsibilities, took precedence over other factors.



*Sylvia:*

*When she was expecting Jane they moved up here and she said will you look after the baby and we'll pay you just like a childminder. At first I said I would look after her [the baby] two or three days<sup>13</sup> but not full-time. Because that's my life you know I've got other things to do. But then I started to look after Jane just one day a week...right from she was 3 months really I've looked after her part-time. She was in nursery a lot of the time because I thought no it's too much. I wouldn't have done it 5 days a week...I couldn't have put up with that. It would have been like going back to when I had my children really. I just said no. I felt awful but...*

*Interviewer:*

*Why did you feel awful?*

*Sylvia:*

*Because I felt as if she was expecting me to do it really and I was letting her down because they had to pay for the nursery. But I thought no I've got to think of myself here. Plus it's my husband as well. I mean he wouldn't want a child in the house 5 days a week either. We're passed that. I mean I was 54 when Jane was born and I thought no. It's too much...far too much with a small baby.*

There had been, however, some flexibility in arrangements over the years, and family childcare was renegotiated when Tom was born. At this stage, Sylvia became crucial to negotiations about household provisioning as Lisa and John knew they could not afford to have two children in private nursery for four days per week, yet they both had to continue to work to meet their financial commitments. They approached Sylvia and asked her to look after the children for two and half days per week. Once again, a monetary component was introduced into the negotiations as by this time, Sylvia was doing some part-time cleaning work. Therefore, Lisa and John asked her to give up one of her cleaning jobs to look after the children and to compensate for lost earnings they said they would pay Sylvia for doing housework work for them.

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<sup>13</sup> There was some discrepancy between Sylvia and Lisa's account of how many days Sylvia initially offered to provide childcare. Sylvia remembers offering 2 or 3 days, although Lisa was quite adamant that Sylvia agreed to only 1 day a week. To confirm, when Lisa returned to work after her first child, Sylvia provided childcare on 1 day and baby Jane was in private nursery for 4 days per week.



Although Sylvia had refused, and still refused, to take payment from Lisa and John for childcare<sup>14</sup>, she agreed to payment for the housework as she needed the money for her own household finances. Furthermore, she also felt that childcare responsibilities were constraining her employment options.

*Sylvia:*

*I had two cleaning jobs but I had to give one up and I do Lisa's... I always said I would never take money off her but with having to give up one of them...I mean I was paying bills with that money...I don't know how people manage. I thought well I'll have to because that money is spoken for...You know they work because they need the money and then she's paying me £20 and I feel awful...I wouldn't take money from her for looking after them. Its different [the housework] because she probably would have got somebody else to do it because she hasn't got time...*

*...I would love [to do another job other than her cleaning jobs]...I mean I've just done a computer course but I couldn't do any other job because who would give me time off...whereas what I do now it doesn't matter when I go as long as I go*

For John and Lisa it has been financially difficult to have both children in private nursery even on a part-time basis, but they recognised that it would have been too much for Sylvia to have both children for the entire week. At the same time, they clearly felt trapped in a cycle of financial hardship and debt that had resulted in them having to rely on Sylvia's support. On one hand, they felt guilty for '*...putting onto*' Sylvia in this way, while on the other they also resented having to be so reliant and indebted to her. They were clearly not particularly happy with their current arrangements but felt they had no other option.

*Lisa:*

*[When asked if it was manageable having 2 children in day nursery]  
No, not financially no but that was the most she would take them...I think it has been a lot on my mam and she's not getting any younger, as she keeps reminding me.*

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 6 where Sylvia states that while she would not take payment from Lisa and John for childcare she would accept this as part of a government allowance.



*...Well I don't like doing it [asking her mother for childcare]. I would rather do it myself. I mean you know they are safe...but I wish I wasn't so tied to my mam. If you ask her if she will change a day and its upheaval. She is stuck in her routines.*

*Interviewer:*

*Do you think it has changed your relationship with her in any way?*

*Lisa:*

*No...well we sometimes...well we had a bit of a go at each other the other week about it because she wouldn't change a day. But we've sorted it out. We do have our ups and downs sometimes and we have had disagreements.*

Lisa and John also thought that being so reliant on Sylvia influenced the way in which they were able to manage their relationship regarding differences in values and standards. As they felt indebted to Sylvia, they said they were unable to insist that she follow their 'way of doing things' and instead felt the childcare support had to be on her terms. Once again, this created an uncomfortable dilemma for Lisa and John where their feelings of appreciation and gratefulness merged with feelings of resentment and frustration.

*Lisa:*

*That's the trouble with relying on your mam, you have to do it round her terms...you just feel like you are obliged to go with what she says because she is doing you the favour. You have to bite your tongue sometimes...well when she's got them then I suppose she is going to have to do it the way she wants.*

*John:*

*Well I mean she does things with the kids that we don't agree with as well with the kids. You know different rules and regulations...well if you don't agree with how they bring them up if you like, because really they are spending, well Sylvia is spending half the time bringing them up and you feel as though well I can't say anything because she's looking after them all the time. I can't really say that we don't mind if the kids do this or that and we don't want them to do this or that. You know you can't say that because she's looking after them.*



This had also extended to decisions about which school the children attended as, at the time of the case study interviews, both children were in full-time primary school and Sylvia was providing before and after school care on three days per week as well as looking after the children for some time during the school holidays. Sylvia lived some way from Lisa and John and as Sylvia did not drive, she had said it would be too much for her to travel by public transport. Therefore, the children attended a school close to Sylvia's home and this had concerned Lisa and John initially as this meant the children did not go to the same school as their friends who lived in the same neighbourhood. However, as they had no other way to manage the before and after school childcare, they agreed to this condition.

*Sylvia:*

*At first they wanted them in a school near their house...but I said I'm not trailing over there in the morning...I haven't got a car. It would mean buses there to pick them up and buses back again at night picking them up from school. So I said I wouldn't do it.*

A further aspect of resentment within the intergenerational relationship in this family was related to reciprocity as both Lisa and John felt that Sylvia expected them to be at her "...beck and call" in return for the childcare support she provided. John in particular felt guilty for resenting this reciprocal arrangement, but at the same felt that Sylvia did not understand or appreciate the amount of stress involved and the constraints on his and Lisa's time having to work such long hours.

*Interviewer:*

*Can I ask is there anything that has ever bothered you about asking Sylvia to help out?*

*John:*

*Yes. You always feel as though...I don't know... as if you are at her beck and call for other things. I know that sounds awful...it sounds really, really horrible for everything she does...but I very rarely get any time and she rings me up and says John pick me up from here and I think I've got to get the kids, I've got to pick Lisa up and I've got to get to my other job and she just doesn't understand how hard it is.*



From Sylvia's perspective she felt she did understand the struggle for young families in today's society but at the same time she also felt resentment that Lisa and John were constantly "...widening the goal posts" of what they expected from her. However, this was also related to different perceptions of 'need' and Sylvia thought that Lisa and John's expectations were too high and that they placed too much emphasis on material possessions. When her own children were small, she had been a 'stay-at-home' mother, taking occasional work on a part-time basis, but nothing permanent. She believed strongly that mothers should stay home with their children and it concerned her that Lisa worked full-time as she thought the children missed out.

Sylvia:

*Yes...yes I feel they...well my daughter was going to go part-time...I was pleased really, really pleased. But she changed her job and had to go back to five days.*

*...Well I think they want more now. I think when we started we had nothing and struggled to get everything we got. We got one thing at a time but I think now people...the young ones today sort of...want everything now. I mean like I wouldn't buy a £1000 computer because I couldn't afford it...But of course the mortgages are high now as well. They have to work really. I understand that...that they have the mortgage and they have to work. But I feel the kids miss out on a lot.*

[Grandmother – case study household 3]

During the interview with John, it was clear that there had been conflict over Lisa going out to work instead of staying home to look after the children. In his opinion, Sylvia did not fully understand how necessary it was that both he and Lisa worked just to enable them to afford to live in a modest family home.

John:

*...it is so much more expensive to live now than when our parents were young. I mean Sylvia still says it now, Lisa shouldn't be working, I never worked. And I say, well we can't afford it, and she still says but she shouldn't be working, I never worked. I was off to bring my kids up. She doesn't understand.*



*...The only way I can explain it to her is to give her the example of my parents. My dad took home £14 a week and his mortgage was £14 a month. One week's wage paid a month's mortgage. Now me and Lisa are living in the same kind of house worth roughly the same now as their's did then, but one week's wage does not pay one month's mortgage for us.*

Considering this from a 'gendered moral rationalities' perspective (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan et al. 2003), the fact that Lisa was engaging in behaviour that her mother found morally unacceptable, may have been at the root of Lisa and Sylvia's relationship problems which most often came to a head over childcare issues. This could also be the reason that Sylvia had placed strict conditions on her family obligation and the reason that she only provided childcare for what she saw as legitimate reasons, such as paid work. Both Lisa and John commented that it was extremely difficult to ask Sylvia to look after the children to allow them to go out in the evening or for planned social events. Therefore, they felt they had missed out on 'normal' grandparent babysitting as Sylvia made it clear that she felt she provided more than her fair share of childcare so that Lisa and John could go out to work.

*John:*

*...she seems to put her foot down and says I look after them enough so we lose out on having a night out a lot of times because she says she has them all week...My wife won't ask her a lot of the time...I would put a wild guess on this, and we are nearly in December, and we've been out 2 or 3 times together in the whole year.*

In summary, family childcare had taken its toll on this family and it seemed that for the sake of their intergenerational relations all members were struggling to reconcile their contradictory feelings of love and affection on the one hand, with resentment on the other. However, at times their differences and disagreements were too difficult to contain, resulting in occasional conflict, but more importantly an underlying tension that was affecting their day-to-day family relationship.



## Comparing family childcare experiences

Having looked more closely at how the family childcare relationship operates through examples from the three case study households it is useful to compare the experiences to consider the implications of revised notions of family obligation and expectations. This is important in terms of taken-for-granted assumptions, especially at a political level, about the amount of childcare support families are prepared to provide and, in the context of social well-being, in considering the strain family childcare might place on family relationships. Therefore, it has been important in this analysis to discuss underlying tensions and conflict among family members. However, when taking an overview of all three case study households, there were clear differences in how the parents and grandparents approached family obligation and expectation and this influenced not only how they managed their commitments, but also seemed to determine the extent of confrontation and conflict and therefore the quality of the their intergenerational relationships.

In the first case study household, family obligation formed an integral part of the inherited family practices which all of the immediate family seemed to accept. Therefore, although there were elements of negotiation, especially at first then the grandparents thought full-time childcare would be too much of a commitment the collective needs of the family always prevailed. This approach extended to other activities and mutual support and reciprocity were 'normal' practices used to share resources and it seemed that the generous manner in which 'give and take' operated within this family contributed to the low levels of conflict and resentment. In contrast, family members in case study household two had a less traditional view of family obligation, where individual needs sometimes superseded collective needs when negotiating childcare support and it appeared that a lower commitment to reciprocity and exchange had led to occasional family conflict. The resentment felt by the grandmother of this household was connected to feelings of being 'taken-for-granted' and unreasonable expectations for childcare at 'non-legitimate' times. Consequently, while the grandmother was mainly satisfied with her level of involvement in childcare and was happy to provide support when, as she said, it was "...*unavoidable*", she understandably resented having to compromise her own interests when she felt the parents could have done more to make other arrangements.



In case study household three, family support had become somewhat of a 'chore' and this had unfortunately created an underlying atmosphere of tension and resentment. While devoted to her grandchildren, the grandmother in this household gave priority to her own and her husband's needs, therefore placing limits on the amount of childcare she was prepared to provide. This was also framed within, and influenced by, the grandmother's values and beliefs that her daughter should have stayed home with her children, especially when they were very young. In fact, this may have been the main reason why the grandmother felt justified in limiting the amount of childcare support and why family obligation was negotiated on the grandmother's 'terms' and this included her making decisions about which factors should be taken into account as legitimate reasons for providing childcare. Therefore, the root of the resentment between the grandmother and the parents seemed to lie in differences in values, beliefs and a lack of appreciation of each other's point of view. While it was entirely reasonable for the grandmother to want her own life and therefore restrict her childcare commitments, this had clearly added to the pressure on the parents who inevitably viewed her limited support as a contributing factor to their financial problems. The grandmother, however, felt the parents were lucky that at least she provided some childcare and had certain immediate expectations of reciprocation. Consequently, reciprocity in this family was seen as a 'right' from the perspective of the grandmother rather than a way of showing appreciation through mutual support.

By looking at these different responses to family obligation it is clearer to see the ways in which negotiated commitment and expectation of reciprocity interact in determining levels of support and perceptions of what is 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'. All grandparents expressed concerns about full-time childcare being 'too much' to cope with. However, this was also linked to notions of 'legitimacy' as in case study household one where the childcare was least restricted, the grandparents' willingness to increase childcare support to full-time was directly related to the mother's change in circumstances when she became a lone parent. This was seen as an especially legitimate reason for additional help with childcare (see also Arthur et al. 2003). In the other two households, the grandmothers seemed to feel more justified in asserting their rights to ensure that the childcare they provided was part-time and that their needs were also taken into account when negotiating childcare. Once again, this was linked to notions of 'legitimacy', with signs of more flexibility when childcare was for work purposes.



However, even when paid work was the reason, there were still questions over legitimacy with different views about what constituted 'need'. The grandmothers in case study households two and three thought that the expectations of the parents were too high and that they demanded a certain standard of living that was, in their opinion, unrealistic and unnecessary. This seemed to have diluted the power of legitimacy in relation to paid work and possibly provided the grandmothers with further justification for restricting the amount of childcare they provided.

Therefore, a comparison between the case study households has also made it possible to see how the ongoing tension between change and continuity between generations contributes to the process (Brannen 2003). Values and beliefs are reinterpreted and adapted over time, and this inevitably results in differences of opinion between the 'old ways' and the 'new ways' of doing things. This was apparent in all three case study households where differences in values and standards had been a source of conflict. However, what was interesting was that the parents in each household had the same response to these situations. They all said they preferred not to challenge the grandparents if they did something with which the parents disagreed, because not only did they feel indebted to them but they also knew this could lead to conflict. This is a further important implication of family childcare, as while the demands on grandparents are more immediately apparent, it should also be considered that the generation of parents who rely so heavily on family childcare may feel less able to 'strike out on their own' or 'make their own mark' (Brannen 2003, pp 1). Therefore, this may be interfering with their independence and development as parents in their own right.

Despite the problems identified in these case studies, as shown in the previous chapters, family childcare remains the most preferred childcare for many parents. Case study household one is a particularly good example of the positive consequences of intensive family childcare. While the lone parent status of the mother was the main reason for the full-time childcare provided by the grandparents, it was also clear that all family members had benefited from the shared pride and success of raising a child in difficult social and economically constrained circumstances.



Similarly, in case study household two, both the mother and the grandmother felt family childcare had brought them closer together, and even though there was more conflict in this, and more noticeably in the last case study household, it was clear that all parents and grandparents had the common focus of the children's well being which bonded the families together. However, the most important message from this analysis of family childcare is that the potential for damage to family relations, especially at an intergenerational level, should not be underestimated. While most families have disagreements about how children should be raised, the intensity of long-term and sustained family childcare, which is complicated by parental guilt and grandparent 'hidden' resentment, means there is more opportunity for these disagreements to result in conflict as illustrated by these case studies. The following conclusions chapter considers ways to properly support parents and complementary childcarers to help sustain this vital childcare resource, while also reducing family conflict and improving the quality of family relationships.



## **Chapter 8: Conclusions and policy implications**

At the outset of this thesis a number of aims were presented to provide a structure for a thorough investigation of the role of complementary childcare, particularly in the form of 'family childcare', in supporting the lives and livelihoods of parents living in Newcastle upon Tyne, the capital city of the North East of England. It was important that this was a comparative study of parents living in different socio-economic circumstances. This was necessary to allow exploration of childcare selection beyond the economic and political to include social factors which impact on decisions within the household about the distribution of non-market and market activities. In the case of complementary childcare this included contributions to household provisioning from family childcarers, especially grandparents, whose experiences have also been represented in this study as part of the household case studies. These have all been explored within the context of childcare policy in the UK and implications for future policy developments.

It was clear from the beginning of the study that a dual approach was required in terms of research methodology and methods in order to satisfy the need for different types of data. Certain aims required a structured approach where data would be produced that could be easily measured and quantified to provide statistical evidence of childcare behaviour among study participants and to provide much needed data about those providing complementary childcare. This was achieved through the quantitative childcare survey where a randomly selected and representative sample of households was used which has added statistical power and strength to the data produced. This makes it more valid to extrapolate the findings to the wider population in the two wards of Newcastle and to other areas with similar socio-economic characteristics. In contrast, other aims of the study required an approach more sensitive to the complexity of the subjective experience (Mason 1996) to gain further insight into why complementary childcare was so important to parents and to explore complementary childcare from the perspective of childcarers. This has been achieved by using focus groups and case study households selected to provide small-scale depth rather than large-scale quantity. The rich qualitative data produced in this way have brought the complementary childcare experience 'to life' and while this has to be viewed in context of the particularity of each of the small number of cases presented, it is likely that the issues raised will resonate with other UK parents and childcarers.



Having addressed these aims through these selected methods, this has produced considerable evidence of the central role of complementary childcare to household provisioning by allowing parents in the study to work but also in terms of social provisioning and well-being. It has also provided the perspective of grandparent childcarers, illustrating the intrinsically rewarding aspects but not at the expense of overlooking the hard work involved in regular childcare and the social and economic consequences faced by some grandparents. Furthermore, by going 'into the household', the study has revealed varying degrees of tension and conflict in the family childcare relationship. By reflecting on the data produced this chapter now explores how the study presented here has moved forward the empirical knowledge and theoretical understanding of complementary childcare and considers the implications for policy development in the UK.

## **Empirical contributions**

For parents in this study, deciding who was appropriate to look after their children was not easy, especially for mothers, as it exposed them to a number of social and moral dilemmas, as well as economic and political 'gendered structures of constraint' (Folbre 1994). This seriously complicated household decision-making where the demands of financial provisioning conflicted with childcare responsibilities highlighting the extent to which childcare is a constraint that affects a mother's position in the home and the workplace. In the introduction to this thesis the questions were asked, how do parents manage now more mothers go out to work, and who is looking after the children? The original data presented in Chapter 5 provided statistical evidence that most parents in this study were turning to complementary childcare, in the form of 'family childcare', to manage their weekly childcare needs. This was for both non-working and working households, but the evidence especially demonstrated the vital role of complementary childcare in households where parents were in paid work. A further important empirical contribution was the comparison between the two sample wards and using socio-economic factors as indicators for social class, the evidence confirmed a greater reliance on complementary childcare, as an exclusive form of childcare, in Walker ward which represented the lower social class in the study. Furthermore, it also confirmed that while the vast majority of all working lone parents in both wards were reliant on complementary childcare, the use among lone parents living in Walker was particularly striking where almost all were using complementary childcare exclusively to allow them to work.



Talking directly to parents made it possible to investigate further the childcare behaviour identified in the childcare survey by considering if this was the result of 'active choice' or 'force of circumstances', therefore gaining more insight into factors influencing how parents select their childcare. In focus groups and during the case study interviews, parents were asked 'why' complementary childcare was so important to them. This highlighted the close relationship between perceptions (or in some cases 'bad' experiences) of formal childcare that had influenced the value parents placed on complementary childcare. The parents confirmed that complementary childcare, especially in the context of a close family relationship, not only offered safety, stability and continuity, but also that 'extra something' parents were looking for in terms of emotional closeness and affection. These were the aspects of family childcare that, from the perspective of the parents in the study, made it qualitatively different and 'better' childcare.

There were also external constraints such as government policies and the cost of formal childcare which impacted on childcare selection and which presented significant obstacles for some mothers when trying to enter the labour market. However, what this study has illustrated is the interrelationship between these external constraints and powerful internal normative constraints such as personal identities of motherhood and transmitted family values and beliefs. How the mothers in focus groups and case study households viewed their role, in the context of persistent ideologies of mothers as main carers, directly influenced their views about who was an appropriate 'substitute' to look after their children. The childcare survey was able to confirm that the main 'substitutes' were family members with friends and neighbours used in a casual, 'back-up' childcare capacity. The family members providing most support were from the mother's side of the family, in particular maternal grandmothers. This was hardly surprising considering that working mothers in the study arranged all or most of weekly childcare and therefore it was expected that they would turn to their own family in the first instance. But it was also unsurprising considering the close association between the perceptions of mothers that they were 'first best' to look after their children but in their absence then 'next best' was their own mother, the children's grandmother.



Therefore, this study has confirmed that the importance of *who* provides childcare cannot be underestimated with examples of situations where the lack of an available family member had prevented mothers entering the labour market and that financial incentives to use formal childcare had not changed the preference for family childcare. While it is also recognised that a major barrier, especially for those mothers on extremely low incomes, was that they still had to contribute to childcare costs despite help with Childcare Tax Credit, the indications were that decisions about childcare were not simply based on monetary factors. Exploring childcare preferences in the lower social class area of Walker provided specific insight into this complex interaction between social and economic constraints, especially as they relate to the position of mothers. When talking to the mothers in the focus group in Walker and the lone mother from the Walker case study household, it was clear that transmitted family beliefs about the role of family and collective norms about who is 'appropriate' to look after your children were especially deep-rooted. Furthermore, the mothers in Walker had particularly strong views about collective childcare, especially for very young children, and while the childcare behaviour and views of parents in both wards illustrated the lack of a 'nursery culture' in Newcastle generally, this was even more evident in Walker ward where there was an especially strong attachment to family childcare.

However, family childcare is not without its problems and an important original contribution of the study is its exploration of the family childcare relationship. Evidence from the childcare survey confirmed that parents felt guilty for 'putting onto' their family by asking for regular childcare creating a 'preference dilemma'. This was related to concerns about the health of grandparents and the demands of regular childcare. This guilt was not unfounded as the original data from the survey confirmed that over a third of complementary childcarers had age related health problems, which was unsurprising considering most were grandparents. They also had other commitments including paid work and caring for others creating additional pressure on their time. The benefit of including grandparents in the case study households meant that it was possible to gain an understanding of how regular childcare constrained their lives. This showed that while they gained a great deal of intrinsic reward from family childcare they also experienced economic and social consequences such as loss of income and conflicting priorities. For these reasons, the care provided was negotiated and conditional and understandably there were examples of where the strain of managing the family childcare relationship had resulted in conflict and underlying tension which was upsetting family relations.



As a result of parental guilt and economic constraints that looking after grandchildren placed on grandparents, there were questions to be asked about whether payment has a place in the family childcare relationship. The childcare survey confirmed that almost all complementary childcare was unpaid especially when provided by family members. However, it also provided evidence of support from parents for paying family members for childcare. Exploring this with parents and grandparents in the case study households, it was possible to shed some light on previous research showing that grandparents do not want payment for childcare (Wheelock and Jones 2002) (Arthur et al. 2003). In the case studies presented here the grandparents said the main concern was *where* the money was coming from. They confirmed that they were reluctant to accept payment from the parents because this would be 'defeating the purpose' of helping them out financially, but they would accept payment from a government allowance. The grandparents and the parents interviewed thought it unlikely that payment would adversely affect their relationships and, in fact, in the Walker case study household the mother had previously paid the grandparents and had only stopped when she was no longer able to afford payment from her lone parent income. Therefore, a further contribution of this study has been to add support, through specific examples, to suggestions that payment could help sustain rather than damage the care relationship (Land 2002).

## **Theoretical developments**

The empirical study carried out for this PhD project was grounded in a theoretical framework used to analyse the data produced. Through the empirical work it has been possible to consider how certain theoretical areas could be further developed. In particular, expanding conceptual understandings of the nature of care (Ungerson 1983) (Graham 1983) and the theoretical proposition of the inseparability of care from the person providing it (Himmelweit 1995). While previous theoretical work has focused on the qualitatively different nature of 'informal care' provided by family and friends to the elderly, infirm and disabled (Qureshi and Walker 1989) (Ungerson 1999), it has not been considered in relation to care of able-bodied children. Having applied these theoretical areas to the analysis of family childcare in particular, it seems that the additional normative constraints of identities of motherhood and the position of children as seen as especially vulnerable and precious to their parents, means that it is even more difficult for parents to separate their perceptions of 'good' childcare from the person providing it. This illustrates the theoretical basis for why formal childcare does not substitute easily for family childcare.



There are also contributions in the area of family duty and obligation. This work has demonstrated that despite the devotion grandparents have for their grandchildren and the love they have for their own children, the support they offer is likely to be conditional. This adds support to theoretical understandings of family obligation as a process of negotiated commitments rather than an overarching normative consensus about levels of support that can be expected or guaranteed (Finch and Mason 1993) (Finch and Mason 1999). However, there are further contributions here in relation to notions of legitimacy when negotiating 'acceptable' levels of support. In two of the case study households, providing childcare for work purposes, while seen as a legitimate reason, was influenced by intergenerational differences between perceptions of 'need'. This was linked to the grandparents' concerns about an increased emphasis on consumerism and a 'must have it now' society and illustrates how the negotiated nature of family responsibility also changes as values and beliefs are reinterpreted and adapted over time (Brannen 2003).

This study has provided further insight into household provisioning based on a sharing of resources at a social and an economic level while contributing to conceptual understandings of household boundaries. Complementary childcare, most often as a contribution made by a grandparent living elsewhere, is a perfect example of household provisioning which is not dependent on co-residency. The particular importance in relation to complementary childcare is the extent to which parents' livelihoods and social well-being can be substantially dependent on the availability of complementary childcare which determines whether parents (mothers) enter the labour market. This confirms the interdependence of the formal and complementary sectors of the economy and in doing so has carried forward theories of political motherhood to consider a shift towards 'political grandmotherhood' recognising the political advantages to the formal economy of unpaid childcare provided by grandmothers to allow mothers to work. However, there are also related issues concerned with theories of economic rationality in connection with decisions about work and childcare. This study has shown that a mother's decision not to enter the labour market because the family member of choice is not available is more likely to be influenced by 'gendered moral rationalities' about what is socially acceptable rather than economic cost-benefit calculations (Duncan and Edwards 1999). Therefore, this study also adds support to theories of different 'rationalities' based on non-market factors, which are collectively determined, extremely gendered and which are especially important in the selection of childcare.



## Policy implications

The evidence produced from this study has specific implications for childcare and employment policy in the UK and it must be asked if these policies are still failing parents. The cost of formal childcare for parents in the UK is high compared to other European countries<sup>1</sup>. What little help there is available with costs through the Childcare Tax Credit is difficult to access because of prohibitive qualifying criteria excluding many parents. Therefore, even for those parents who would want to use registered childcare provision such as day nurseries or childminders, the reality is that paying for this childcare, especially full-time daycare for children aged 0-3 years, remains economically unrealistic. This has been clearly demonstrated in this study by the high percentages of parents who said they could not afford to pay regular childcare and through examples from the case study households. Therefore, this seriously calls into question the appropriateness of the mixed economy approach adopted by New Labour with the emphasis on increasing private childcare markets within the overarching 'Third Way' agenda of public/private partnerships.

However, as discussed in relation to the empirical and theoretical contributions of this study, cost is not the only factor which influences childcare selection. Yet policymakers in the UK continue to make the 'rationality mistake' (Duncan et al. 2003) by overlooking socio-cultural factors and ignoring the importance of complementary childcare as a resource-sharing process contributing to economic and social well-being. As shown in this study, the perceived quality and nature of childcare are important considerations for many parents with indications that these perceptions may vary depending on social position and geographical location (see also (Duncan et al. 2004)). Therefore, if some parents continue to prefer close family members to care for their children, providing more nurseries or childminders, even if they are affordable, may not be sufficient to solve the current 'childcare crisis' in the UK. In taking forward theoretical understandings of the nature of childcare, this adds support to the recognition of childcare as a 'peculiar market' (Ball and Vincent 2005). The socio-cultural aspects of childcare described demonstrate that there will always be aspects that are 'incompletely commodified' (Radin 1996) (Himmelweit 1999) making it difficult to 'sell' childcare in the same way as other products.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3, table 3.1.



Therefore, it must be acknowledged that some parents may not be prepared to turn to the market for childcare, no matter what financial incentives are provided. As the indications from this study show that this may be particularly so in disadvantaged areas where there is little sign of a 'nursery culture' for the under 3s, then this has serious implications for current initiatives aimed at increasing nurseries in these areas<sup>2</sup>. The emphasis in the original 'National Childcare Strategy' and the more recent 'Ten Year Strategy' on the quality of childcare appears oblivious to how parents view 'quality'. While the Government is concerned about educational, social, cognitive and emotional development, it seems parents view 'quality' in terms of emotional closeness and social well-being which they value more highly, especially when their children are very young. Furthermore, there were parents in this study that had little confidence in the quality of formal childcare with concerns about the thoroughness of official vetting and monitoring systems for childcare to prevent abuse and neglect. These perceptions, whether justified or the result of over zealous media coverage, cannot be overlooked as real barriers preventing consideration of some forms of childcare and once again there are policy implications for future development of childcare provision.

Evidence from this, and other studies of childcare used by UK parents, confirms the heavy reliance on complementary childcare. The indications from this study are that if this support is not available, or if it were withdrawn, many parents (especially mothers) would either leave or would not even consider (re)entering the workforce in the first place. This again highlights how important complementary childcare is at present to the UK formal economy. However, there are signs that there is dissent in the ranks of the 'army of grandparents' on which UK parents rely and it is short-sighted to assume that complementary childcare will go on regardless and that it can continue to be taken-for-granted. At present, complementary childcare is shouldered by a cohort of grandmothers who are likely to have had a weak attachment to the labour market. This may not be the case when the current generation of working mothers become grandmothers, as they may not be available for childcare. Or, they may not want to spend their retirement looking after their grandchildren as confirmed by a mother from one of the case study households who said she would not be prepared to provide childcare for her own daughter as, *"...I will have done my bit bringing them up."* In terms of more immediate availability, government policy is now encouraging employment among the over 50s and this may directly compromise the Government's reliance on grandparents as childcarers (Gray 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3.



Considering the current reliance on complementary childcare in the UK at a social and economic level for parents and at a macroeconomic level for the formal economy, it must be time to consider ways to recognise and reward those who provide it. As Nancy Folbre has commented,

We must start thinking about care as a propensity that can be defended and developed – or weakened and wasted – by economic risks and rewards. (Folbre 2001, pp. 210)

At present, the exclusion of complementary childcare from financial support must appear discriminatory from the parents' perspective and exploitative from the childcarers' perspective. As illustrated by cases in this study, there are situations where payment to complementary childcarers would make a significant difference to their ability and willingness of continue to provide this vital childcare. It is therefore important that the economic consequences for complementary childcarers are minimised where possible and there are ways in which this could be achieved. An important consideration is the position of grandparents in relation to their pension as if they reduce their hours or give up work to provide childcare, they risk damaging their final pension entitlements which is based on the last two or three years of work. Changes to allow consideration of the best pay over a number of years could provide the protection necessary (see also (Wheelock and Jones 2002)).

A further advancement would be to include family childcare in particular in the Childcare Tax Credit System without family members having to undergo the same rigorous registration process as childminders. Parents in this study felt strongly that family members should not have to register, but if they must, then surely a 'light-touch' approach is more appropriate. This could have been achieved through the 'Home Childcarers' scheme which was introduced in 2004 to register au pairs and nannies quickly and easily so that parents could claim Childcare Tax Credit. Unfortunately, once again complementary childcare was excluded and it was clearly stated that this scheme could not be used for family members. However, as well as inclusion of family members, to make Childcare Tax Credit more accessible to parents there also needs to be a dramatic increase to the income thresholds to qualify for Childcare Tax Credit. As demonstrated by examples in this study, moderate-income families that earn too much to claim Childcare Tax Credit, but too little to afford to pay for childcare, face serious challenges in balancing work and childcare and feel little is being done to support them.



Therefore, the indications are that extending Childcare Tax Credit to include family members and making it more accessible would make parents feel that their preferences were being understood and valued by the Government. Meanwhile, from the grandparents' perspective, payment for childcare could help overcome some of the financial constraints they face, especially those who might forgo paid work in order to provide childcare or those who need help with expenses and transportation costs. Two of the grandmothers in this study found it difficult to understand why the Government are prepared to pay registered childminders but are not prepared to pay them for the same childcare. This is a valid query and begs the question why has the Government continued to exclude complementary childcare?

Is it that they are afraid to 'open the treasury floodgates' for fear that all complementary childcarers would suddenly appear demanding payment? This is unlikely as the strict qualifying criteria and income thresholds are already restricting access to Childcare Tax Credit for many parents. Furthermore, this is a redundant argument as the Government are prepared to pay to provide help with formal childcare for the very low income parents they are targeting (especially lone parents) so there would be little financial difference whether this was paid to a registered childminder or a family member. Therefore, it seems more likely that the main reason is the promotion of formal childcare to improve control and monitoring and enhance the social development of children. However, if the Government is serious about this increase in formal childcare and about integrating more mothers into the labour market, then there needs to be a far greater commitment to state supported universal childcare in combination with improved family friendly policies (Himmelwiet and Sigala 2004) (Land 2002a). This would require an approach similar to other European countries where universal childcare is seen as the right of children rather than a requirement to allow their parents to work. In countries such as Denmark and Sweden entitlement to childcare is not dependent on a parent's attachment to the labour market and therefore childcare remains consistent and continuous even if the parents move in and out of work. In these countries collective childcare even for very young children has become the cultural norm and therefore mothers are not morally or socially compromised when going out to work.



The difficulty for the current UK Government is that they are fighting against certain attitudes and beliefs about childcare that have been previously supported and encouraged through a historical lack of commitment to childcare provision. Not only has this contributed to the structure of the predominately part-time nature of mothers' employment in the UK (McRae 2003) but has also constructed a childcare culture which is solidly rooted in an ideology of motherhood which continues to criticise mothers for leaving their children, especially when they are very young. As shown in this study, there is a close relationship between identities of motherhood and preferences for childcare as some mothers described their desire for a 'substitute mother' a 'second home' as a way of overcoming their anxiety and guilt when leaving their children to go out to work. Therefore, within this context, it is more understandable why mothers turn to their own mothers as the most 'natural' substitute and adds to our understanding of why complementary childcare is so widespread in the UK.

However, changing deeply rooted cultural beliefs takes time, especially entrenched ideologies such as the 'proper' role of a mother. Nevertheless, research has shown that views are not necessarily fixed and that mothers can develop more positive attitudes towards employment and childcare through a 'feedback multiplier effect' (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004). This has focused on the benefits of enabling policies that lift constraints therefore reducing the costs of motherhood. It is here that access to universal childcare could make a difference in changing attitudes initially and eventually change behaviour towards a culture of childcare that has the potential to be more beneficial to parents (mothers in particular), children and complementary childcarers. As commented elsewhere, this would mean high quality childcare available to all children at a cost low enough to ensure that no child is excluded (Himmelweit and Sigala 2004). Therefore, this would allow parents the flexibility to consider realistically other childcare options so that no parent feels they have to 'put onto' their family by asking for what they considered to be unacceptable amounts of childcare. It could also mean that no grandparent feels socially or politically coerced into providing more childcare support than they would want to but instead could maintain a 'back-up' support role in helping with childcare where the beneficial aspects of family childcare could be preserved.



This universal approach to childcare would also require other policies to 'meet parents half way' in terms of their preferences for childcare, especially for very young babies. Parents in this study were particularly resistant to a day nursery environment for children under one year old with views changing for older children when parents are then happy for their children to be in a collective environment so they learn to mix and socialise. There was also a strong desire to have one parent stay home with children at least in their first year of life when parents felt it was important to have close interaction between parent and child. Although not expected until 2010, the improved parental leave to one year as proposed in the Government's new 'Ten Year Strategy' for childcare is certainly a step in the right direction, especially the additional benefit of mothers being able to transfer part of this leave to fathers. However, as argued elsewhere a more radical approach would be to extend this leave to 18 months in line with research showing the benefits of a close relationship with an individual carer during this early stage (Daycare Trust 2005). This would also require a review of current rates of maternity (or potentially paternity) pay in the UK which are among the lowest in Europe, to ensure that parents can realistically consider extended leave. Through these measures it is possible to see how extended parental leave, combined with universal access to childcare for children from age one or 18 months (as is the case in other countries) could transform the experience of UK parents (especially mothers) who are currently struggling to find ways to combine paid work and childcare, particularly if they have children under age 3.

There is also the issue of flexible working, especially to manage childcare around school hours and to take time off in emergencies. As shown in this study, a third of working parents had managed to remain childcare self-sufficient and the statistical data confirmed a desire among others to do the same. Again, while more recent policy in the UK has gone some way to improve the situation by introducing the right to request reduced working hours, it must be asked, is this enough? As illustrated through specific cases in this study, it appears that the 'right to request' rather than a straightforward commitment for the 'right' to work reduced hours as is the case in other countries (Daycare Trust 2005) continues to reinforce the importance of paid work, reducing care to a periphery activity that remains undervalued. Therefore, those who take time out or work fewer hours will inevitably be seen as less committed to 'real' work. Without properly enforced legislation to counteract discrimination for parents who reduce their hours, it will remain difficult for parents who want to maintain their labour market career to see this as a realistic option.



This has serious implications for the future of a fairer distribution of domestic labour and caring activities between men and women as having seen the discrimination mothers face due to discontinuous employment and part-time work, some fathers may be reluctant to take advantage of improved parental leave. This is unfortunate, as when talking through the experience with a father from one of the case study households, he said taking time out of work to be main carer for his children when they were babies had made him a “...*better person*.” [Peter, father from case study household 20]. However, there is also a different way of viewing the issue of parental leave and reduced working hours. It could be possible that rather than transferring the discrimination faced by mothers to fathers that if more fathers took time out or worked less hours to care for their children this could, through the ‘feedback multiplier effect’, change attitudes making it more acceptable for mothers and fathers to take career breaks and work less without losing seniority.

Therefore, the importance here is for policies that protect mothers and potentially fathers against the costs of parenthood. This is essential if the gendered nature of (child)care and the gender gap between the position of men and women in the labour market, are to be seriously challenged. As discussed in Chapter 2, the rapid rate at which women are being incorporated in the labour market has not been matched by a similar increase in men’s participation in the home, therefore,

Instead of humanising men, we are capitalising women. (Hochschild 2003, pp. 28).

Similarly, it has also been suggested that the focus for change should be, “...for men’s work to become more like that of women rather than vice versa”. (Crompton and Harris 1998, pp. 147). This requires change at a more fundamental level so that care is more universally respected as a public value rather than a private good (Tronto 1993). In an ethics of care framework of this type where care is seen as a social responsibility it becomes more legitimate and then more people, especially men, could find themselves sharing responsibility for care, “...not simply because it is fair, but because it is important.” (Hochschild 2003, pp. 222). Furthermore, it is in this type of framework that all care would be valued more thoroughly and rewarded more fairly whether this is improvement to wages for paid careworkers, or in the case of this study, the inclusion of complementary childcare into recognised financial reward systems.



It is only hoped that the more radical changes towards universal childcare provision, improved family friendly policies and greater recognition of the value of care in our society described here are realistic in terms of long-term goals. Surely, considering our universal need for care at all stages of our lives this is the type of society we should be striving for. However, in the short-term, this study provides a stark warning of the hazards of 'assuming away' the invaluable resource of complementary childcare. While family childcare in particular can be rewarding and have a positive impact in terms of intergenerational well-being, there are negative aspects to consider especially where the childcare is prolonged and intensive. The consequences to both parents and grandparents cannot be ignored or overlooked any longer, as they are important to the sustainability of family childcare on which parents and the economy in the UK currently rely.



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# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Criteria used to select city wards**

To allow a comparison of the use of complementary childcare in a range of households and family circumstances two contrasting city wards of Newcastle upon Tyne were investigated which had very different socio-economic characteristics. Based on data from the 1996 Inter-censal survey, 'Newcastle upon Tyne City Profiles', produced by the Research Services, Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, the two wards selected were Dene and Walker and the main factors considered when deciding on these wards were as follows:

- **Position on the Index of Local Deprivation (DETR 1998)** – Out of 26 wards, with 1<sup>st</sup> position being the most disadvantaged and 26<sup>th</sup> being the least, Dene was placed 23<sup>rd</sup> on the Index of Local Deprivation for Newcastle upon Tyne whereas Walker was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most disadvantaged ward in the City.
- **Lone parent households** – 46 per cent of the households in Walker were headed by a lone parent compared to 10 per cent in Dene (City average 25%)
- **Unemployment rates** – In Dene ward unemployment rates were 2 per cent for females and 8 per cent for males compared to 18 per cent for females and 44 per cent for males in Walker.
- **Household type** – Dene was characterised by higher levels of privately owned households with 80 per cent owner-occupied and 20 per cent rented accommodation. This situation was completely reversed in Walker where 21 per cent of households were owner-occupied and 79 per cent rented.
- **Mobility** – Both wards had fairly stable populations and evidence of strong family networks with close relatives living nearby. Levels of movement and mobility were low in both wards and although families in Walker tended to move house more often, this was usually movement within the ward rather than movement to a different area. Movement into the area from outside of Newcastle was higher in Dene whereas there was very little movement into Walker from outside the area.



## APPENDIX 2

### Summary of focus group participants

<p><b>FOCUS GROUP 1</b></p>	<p><i>Julia:</i> Lone mother; one child in primary school; working part-time; using formal childcare  <i>Nicky:</i> Partnered mother; two children, one pre-school, one in primary school; working full-time; using complementary childcare  <i>Louise:</i> Partnered mother; two pre-school children; working part-time; using complementary childcare  <i>Patricia:</i> Partnered mother; two pre-school children; not working  <i>Katie:</i> Lone mother; one older child; not in paid work  <i>Rachel:</i> Partnered mother; two older children; working school time hours only; not using regular childcare  <i>Sara :</i>Partnered mother; three children, two pre-school, one in primary school; not in paid work  <i>Kim:</i> Partnered mother; three pre-school children; not working  <i>Fiona:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child; not working  <i>Helen:</i> Partnered mother; two pre-school children, not working</p>
<p><b>FOCUS GROUP 2</b></p>	<p><i>Valerie:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child; not working  <i>Carole:</i> Partnered mother; five children, one pre-school, three in primary school, one older child; not working  <i>Laura:</i> Lone mother; two children, one pre-school, one in primary school; not working  <i>Kathy:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child; working as a volunteer  <i>Ruth:</i> Lone mother; three children, two in primary school, one older child; working as a volunteer  <i>Emma:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child; working part-time; using complementary childcare</p>
<p><b>FOCUS GROUP 3</b></p>	<p><i>Jane:</i> Lone mother; one pre-school child; not working  <i>Clare:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child, one in primary school aged; not working  <i>Pauline:</i> Partnered mother; one pre-school child; working part-time; using complementary childcare  <i>Helen:</i> Partnered mother; three children, two in primary school, one older child; not working  <i>Liz:</i> Lone mother; two children, one pre-school, one in primary school; not working  <i>Gill:</i> Partnered mother; two children, both pre-school; not working  <i>Joan:</i> Partnered mother; three children, all in primary school; not working  <i>Jennifer:</i> Partnered mother; two children, both pre-school; not working  <i>Nancy:</i> Lone mother; one pre-school child; not working</p>



## APPENDIX 3

### TOPIC GUIDE

#### FOCUS GROUPS WITH MOTHERS

##### Purpose of discussion

To discuss what you do when you need someone to look after your children/kids – in other words your childcare arrangements. In particular if services are being developed in their area, we need to have their views.

INTRODUCTIONS – how many children and their ages

##### 1. USE

Other than you who else looks after/minds/watches your child/ren?

###### PROBE

- See if partners are mentioned – if not probe and explore how childcare is arranged (between self/partner)
- What other types of childcare (eg, nurseries, childminders, family/friends – might have multiple arrangements)

Encourage discussion about differences in childcare – benefits and disadvantages

##### 2. WHY AND WHEN USING CHILDCARE

###### PROBE

- work, training, education/studying (hours involved)
- in emergencies (who)
- before/after school (Out of School Services)
- school holidays
- a break (to go shopping/meet friends etc)

##### 3. OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES

- What do they know about out of school services (before/after school clubs, school holiday schemes)
- How would they feel about paying for this service
- Do they know about Working family tax credit and childcare tax credit and that it can be used for Out-of-school services.
- What type of services would they like in their area (hours of use, evenings, weekends)

##### 4. FOCUS ON COMPLEMENTARY CHILDCARE – *family/relatives or friends/neighbours*

###### PROBE – *Who are they?*

- grandparent (your mother/father/mother-in-law/father-in-law)
- other relative (who?)
- friend
- group of friends (reciprocal arrangements – *EXPLORE*)

##### 5. DECIDING ON CHILDCARE

How you decided on this type of care?

###### PROBE

- **first choice** (preference)
- **only choice** (circumstances)
- **worked through** (compromise between preference and circumstances)

##### 6. ATTITUDES

- towards someone else looking after your child/ren
- towards parents and work (women working)



## **APPENDIX 4**

**Information leaflet**

**For**

**focus group participants**



**If you would like any further  
information or you have any  
questions**

**Please contact:**

**Lesley Ann Hall  
PhD Research Student  
Department of Social Policy  
Claremont Bridge Building  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 7RU**

**Tele: 0191 222 8469**

**E-mail: [lesley.hall@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:lesley.hall@ncl.ac.uk)**

**Thank you**

**Thank you for childcare**

**November 1999**

**Dear Parent(s)**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this group discussion. Many parents rely on relatives, friends or neighbours to look after their children. This could be to allow them to work, study or train or just to give them a break. Nobody really knows much about this kind of childcare or how much it is used by parents.

It may be that parents prefer a relative or close friend to look after their children or there may be reasons that they do not use or want to use other kinds of childcare such as nurseries, childminders or out of school care.

We want to find out more about childcare that is provided by family and friends to see if there is a way to support parents in their choice of childcare. We can only learn about this by talking to parents directly about what they think about childcare that is available in Newcastle and what they would like to see for the future.

This leaflet gives more information about how we plan to do this and answers some of the questions you may have about this project.

**Yours sincerely**



**Lesley Ann Hall  
University of Newcastle working in collaboration with  
Newcastle City Council - Early Years Development and  
Childcare Partnership**



- ***Who is doing this study about childcare?***

The study is being carried out by the Department of Social Policy at Newcastle University, working with the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership at Newcastle City Council.

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has been set up to support the National Childcare Strategy. This aims to ensure that all families with children aged 0-14 years have access to the childcare they prefer.

- ***Why are you asking about childcare provided by family and friends?***

To allow the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to develop childcare services that are useful and relevant to parents, it is important to know about all kinds of childcare that parents use, including care provided by family and friends.

- ***What's in it for parents and families?***

The opportunity to contribute to and influence the development of childcare services that will be most useful to them.

- ***How will you go about finding out about this kind of childcare?***

We can only find out about how parents feel and what their views are about childcare by asking them. This will be done in three different ways.

In the first place, we are meeting with groups of parents to discuss what they think is important when deciding on what kind of childcare to use. We will use what parents tell us to develop a questionnaire survey. Then we will ask a larger number of parents to spare some to meet with us to complete the survey. Finally, we will interview some of the parents to discuss their views about childcare in more detail

- ***What will you do with the information you get?***

What parents tell us about their childcare needs and preferences will be used by the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to develop local childcare services. This is to make sure that they do everything they can to support parents and the relatives, friends and neighbours who look after their children.

***Any information that parents give to us will be treated with complete confidentiality***

***Useful contact information:***

Early Years and Childcare information Service: 0191 261 7658

Working Family Tax Credit/Childcare Tax Credit: 0800 597 5976

Community Health Services – health visitors, school nurses etc  
East (covers Sandyford, Byker, Monkchester, Walker): 0191 219 4641  
North (covers Jesmond, Kenton, Gosforth, Heaton): 0191 210 6624

East End Resource Centre 0191 224 4404

Includes the following information and advice services:

- East End Partnership Team – includes a community resource worker.
- Citizens Advice Bureau (in-work benefit project)

***Special Educational needs teaching and support services***

- Pre-school support for children with special educational needs (in nursery) – 0191 229 1441
- Education Support for children in reception class and above – 0191 267 4447

***Parent line***

Confidential telephone helpline for parents under stress: 0808 800 2222



## **APPENDIX 5**

### **‘Opt-letter’ sent out by Headteachers of all primary schools**

22 May 2000

Dear Parent(s)

#### **Asking Newcastle parents about their childcare**

I am writing to ask you if you can help with some research. A study at Newcastle University wants to find out from parents about the kinds of childcare they use. The researcher is Lesley Hall. This is a chance to give your views on what you think is best for your children. Some parents like relatives or friends to look after their children. Other parents use more formal childcare, eg, nurseries, out-of-school clubs or childminders. Your views are very important, even if nobody else looks after your children.

#### **If you agree to take part in the study**

Taking part in the study is completely voluntary. Your name and address will be kept confidential. If you are willing to take part you need do nothing at this stage. An interviewer from Newcastle University will contact you to arrange a time to come and see you. It will take about 40 minutes to answer the questions. All information given to the researcher will be treated in the strictest confidence. No information about individuals will be passed on to anyone else.

If you do not want to take part in the study please telephone 0191 222 8469 before 9<sup>th</sup> June and your name will be taken off the list of people to be contacted.

This study is on behalf of the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Your response will help the Partnership to support families in their choice of childcare.

Thank you so much for your help. There is a prize draw for all parents who take part in the study - £100 as 1<sup>st</sup> prize, £75 as 2<sup>nd</sup> prize and £50 as 3<sup>rd</sup> prize.

Yours faithfully

Headteacher



**APPENDIX 6**

**The Childcare Survey Questionnaire**



# Confidential

## Childcare Survey

No information will be passed on to anyone else and will only be used for the purpose of this survey

University of Newcastle  
and  
Newcastle Early Years Development  
and Childcare Partnership

UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE



### CHILDCARE SURVEY

SURVEY NUMBER

INTERVIEWER NUMBER

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – PART ONE TO BE COMPLETED DURING TELEPHONE CALL OR AT DOORSTEP WHEN ARRANGING INTERVIEW. COMPLETE PART TWO AT TIME OF INTERVIEW

#### PART 1

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF NO CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11  
DO NOT PROCEED

DATE ARRANGED FOR INTERVIEW

WHO WILL BE INTERVIEWED (EG, MOTHER, FATHER - MUST BE A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN)

WARD

Dene

Walker

Other (SPECIFY)

FIRST LINE OF ADDRESS (house number and name of street):

CONFIRM POSTCODE (if known)

#### PART 2

DATE INTERVIEW CARRIED OUT

TIME INTERVIEW STARTED (use 24 hour clock)

TIME INTERVIEW FINISHED (use 24 hour clock)

ENTER PRIZE DRAW

Yes

No

£100 1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE, £75 2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE AND £50 3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE  
(INTERVIEWER PLEASE STRESS – ENTERING PRIZE DRAW WILL NOT  
EFFECT CONFIDENTIALITY IN ANY WAY)



## SECTION 1 – CHILDREN

**“Thank you for agreeing to answer some questions about your childcare – your views are very important to this study and anything you tell me is completely confidential – no information will be passed on to anyone else. What we are trying to find out about is the overall arrangements parents make to have their children looked after. This includes childcare inside your family (for example relatives who help you with childcare) and outside the family (friends or neighbours as well as more formal types of childcare such as nurseries, out-of-school clubs or registered childminders).**

**To begin I would like to start by asking some general questions about ALL of your children who live you. Later on I will be asking more detailed questions about childcare for your children under the age 11. "**

- 1. How many children do you have who live with you?**

- ## 2. How old are they? – "...we will start with your youngest child"

Child 1 (youngest child)	Age	_____ years _____ months
Girl		<div><div></div><div>1</div></div>
Boy		<div><div></div><div>2</div></div>

Child 2 (second youngest child)	Age	_____ years _____ months	1	2
Girl				
Boy				

Child 3 (third youngest child)	Age	_____ years _____ months
Girl		<div>1</div>
Boy		<div>2</div>

Child 4 (fourth youngest child)	Age	_____ years _____ months
Girl		<div><div>1</div><div></div></div>
Boy		<div><div>2</div><div></div></div>

Child 5 (fifth youngest child)	Age	_____ years _____ months
Girl		<div><div></div><div>1</div></div>
Boy		<div><div></div><div>2</div></div>

Child 6 Age \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
 (sixth youngest child)

Girl ☐ 1 ☐ 2  
 Boy ☐ 1 ☐ 2

- 3.** Do any of your children have any difficulties that create problems when arranging childcare? (for example, an identified disability, health problems, development or behaviour problems, special diet, English is not a first language etc)?

	1	2
Yes		
No		

- IF YES**

- Which of your children has difficulties? (tick all that apply)?**

Child1(youngest)	Child2	Child3	Child4	Child5	Child6

- ### What are these difficulties?

Child1 (youngest)

Child2

Child3

Child4

Child5

Child6

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT HAS MORE THAN SIX CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH THEM THEN GIVE BRIEF DETAILS BELOW:**

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CHILD1 – YOUNGEST CHILD

INTERVIEWER NOTE: ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

"If I could now ask you about where your child/ren are looked after or who looks after them other than you or your spouse/partner who lives with you (if applicable)".  
INTERVIEWER NOTE: CONFIRM IF LIVING WITH SPOUSE/PARTNER AT THIS POINT  
– IF LIVING WITH SPOUSE OR PARTNER EXPLAIN THAT TO SIMPLIFY QUESTIONS  
THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY THIS PERSON WILL BE REFERRED TO AS 'PARTNER'

CHILD 1

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD1 (youngest child)

4.1. Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD1 (youngest)?  
(INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used – circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7

☐ 8

☐ 9

☐ 10

☐ 11

☐ 12

☐ 13

OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD1 (youngest child)

5.1. Do any of the following people look after CHILD1 (youngest)?  
(INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your ex-partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other female relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other male relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Friend or friends(s) – female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Friend or friends – male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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NORMAL OR TYPICAL WEEK – CHILD 1 (Youngest)

INTERVIEWER NOTES: SEE FORM CCTT (ENLARGED VERSION OF CHILDCARE TIMETABLE) ON NEXT PAGE. PLEASE NOTE IMPORTANT PROMPTS

“Still thinking about your youngest child, could we fill in this timetable together to give me an idea of who looks after her/him during a typical week...”

6.1 Timetable for CHILD1 – (USE LAST WEEK UNLESS THIS WAS EXCEPTIONAL IN SOME WAY)

SAMPLE TIMETABLE –FORM CCTT

	Early morning (before school)	Morning 9-12:30	Lunchtime	Afternoon 1:15-3.30	after school 3:30-6:00	Evening (up to bedtime 6:00-10:00	Overnight
Monday	Me and partner	Me	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Tuesday	Me and partner	Friend	Friend	Friend	Me	Me	Me and partner
Wednesday	Me and partner	Partner & toddler	Me	Me	Me	Me and partner	Me and partner
Thursday	Me and partner	Crèche (family centre)	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Friday	Me and partner	My mother	My mother	Me	Me	My sister	Me and partner
Saturday	Me and partner	Mother & father-in-law	Mother & father-in-law	Me and partner	Me and partner	My mother & father	My mother & father
Sunday	My mother & father	My mother & father	My mother & father	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner

FORM CCTT

COMPLETE TABLE 1, TABLE 2 AND WEEKLY TIMETABLE FOR ALL CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

IF CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS ARE THE SAME WRITE “SAME AS PREVIOUS CHILD” ON TABLES AND TIMETABLE

WHEN COMPLETED FOR ALL CHILDREN (UNDER 11) MOVE TO SECTION 2 – ‘REGULAR CHILDCARERS’

FORM CCTT - CHILDCARE TIMETABLE (ONE PER CHILD) CHILD 1 (Youngest)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Early morning (before school)							
Morning 9-12:30							
Lunchtime							
Afternoon 1:30-3:30							
Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm							
Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm							
Overnight							

- Make sure to include partner (also include ex-partner if they look after children during the week)
- Make sure to include older siblings (eg, child's older brother or sister)
- If respondent's mother or partner's mother is mentioned, check if father or partner's father also looks after children at the same time
- Same as above if respondent's father or partner's father is mentioned (check if mother or partner's mother looks after children at the same time)
- If 'nursery' is mentioned check type of nursery – private, local authority, nursery class attached to a primary school or other (specify other)
- If crèche is mentioned check type – workplace, shopping/leisure, family centre etc (specify)

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Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Sun



CHILD2 – SECOND YOUNGEST CHILD

ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

CHILD 2

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD2 (youngest child)

4.2 Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD2? (INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used – circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD2

5.2 Do any of the following people look after CHILD2? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex -partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other female relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other male relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends(s) – female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends – male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week

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NORMAL OR TYPICAL WEEK – CHILD 2

INTERVIEWER NOTES: SEE FORM CCTT (ENLARGED VERSION OF CHILDCARE TIMETABLE) ON NEXT PAGE. PLEASE NOTE IMPORTANT PROMPTS

6.2 Timetable for CHILD2 – (USE LAST WEEK UNLESS THIS WAS EXCEPTIONAL IN SOME WAY)

SAMPLE TIMETABLE –FORM CCTT

	Early morning (before school)	Morning 9-12:30	Lunchtime	Afternoon 1:15-3.30	after school 3:30-6:00	Evening (up to bedtime 6:00-10:00	Overnight
Monday	Me and partner	Me	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Tuesday	Me and partner	Friend	Friend	Friend	Me	Me	Me and partner
Wednesday	Me and partner	Partner & toddler	Me	Me	Me	Me and partner	Me and partner
Thursday	Me and partner	Crèche (family centre)	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Friday	Me and partner	My mother	My mother	Me	Me	My sister	Me and partner
Saturday	Me and partner	Mother & father-in-law	Mother & father-in-law	Me and partner	Me and partner	My mother & father	My mother & father
Sunday	My mother & father	My mother & father	My mother & father	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner

FORM CCTT

INTERVIEWER NOTE

MOVE TO CHILD3

IF NO MORE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11  
GO TO SECTION 2 – REGULAR CHILD CARERS

FORM CCTT - CHILDCARE TIMETABLE (ONE PER CHILD) CHILD 2

INTERVIEWER PROMPTS

- Make sure to include partner (also include ex-partner if they look after children during the week)
- Make sure to include older siblings (eg, child's older brother or sister)
- If respondent's mother or partner's mother is mentioned, check if father or partner also looks after children at the same time
- Same as above if respondent's father or partner's father is mentioned (check if mother or partner's mother looks after children at the same time)
- If 'nursery' is mentioned check type of nursery – private, local authority, nursery class attached to a primary school or other (specify other)
- If crèche is mentioned check type – workplace, shopping/leisure, family centre etc (specify)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)	Early morning (before school)
Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30	Morning 9-12:30
Lunchtime	Lunchtime	Lunchtime	Lunchtime	Lunchtime	Lunchtime	Lunchtime
Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30	Afternoon 1:30-3:30
Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm	Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm
Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm	Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm
Overnight	Overnight	Overnight	Overnight	Overnight	Overnight	Overnight

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CHILD3

ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

CHILD 3

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD3

4.3 Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD3? (INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used - circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD3

5.3 Do any of the following people look after CHILD3? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often - circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other female relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other male relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends(s) - female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends - male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week

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CHILD4

ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

CHILD 4

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD4

4.4 Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD4? (INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used – circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD4

5.4 Do any of the following people look after CHILD4? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex –partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other female relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other male relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends(s) – female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends – male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week

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NORMAL OR TYPICAL WEEK – CHILD 4

INTERVIEWER NOTES: SEE FORM CCTT (ENLARGED VERSION OF CHILDCARE TIMETABLE) ON NEXT PAGE. PLEASE NOTE IMPORTANT PROMPTS

6.4 Timetable for CHILD4 – (USE LAST WEEK UNLESS THIS WAS EXCEPTIONAL IN SOME WAY)

SAMPLE TIMETABLE –FORM CCTT

	Early morning (before school)	Morning 9-12:30	Lunchtime	Afternoon 1:15-3:30	after school 3:30-6:00	Evening (up to bedtime 6:00-10:00	Overnight
Monday	Me and partner	Me	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Tuesday	Me and partner	Friend	Friend	Friend	Me	Me	Me and partner
Wednesday	Me and partner	Partner & toddler	Me	Me	Me	Me and partner	Me and partner
Thursday	Me and partner	Crèche (family centre)	My mother	My mother	Me	Partner	Me and partner
Friday	Me and partner	My mother	My mother	Me	Me	My sister	Me and partner
Saturday	Me and partner	Mother & father-in-law	Mother & father-in-law	Me and partner	Me and partner	My mother & father	My mother & father
Sunday	My mother & father	My mother & father	My mother & father	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner	Me and partner

FORM CCTT

INTERVIEWER NOTE

MOVE TO CHILD5

IF NO MORE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11  
GO TO SECTION 2 – REGULAR CARERS

FORM CCTT - CHILDCARE TIMETABLE (ONE PER CHILD) CHILD 4

INTERVIEWER PROMPTS

- Make sure to include partner (also include ex-partner if they look after children during the week)
- Make sure to include older siblings (eg, child's older brother or sister)
- If respondent's mother or partner's mother is mentioned, check if father or partner's father also looks after children at the same time
- Same as above if respondent's father or partner's father is mentioned (check if mother or partner's mother looks after children at the same time)
- If 'nursery' is mentioned check type of nursery – private, local authority, nursery class attached to a primary school or other (specify other)
- If crèche is mentioned check type – workplace, shopping/leisure, family centre etc (specify)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Early morning (before school)							
Morning 9-12:30							
Lunchtime							
Afternoon 1:30-3:30							
Late afternoon (after school) 3:30-6:00pm							
Evening (up to bedtime) 6:00pm to 10:00pm							
Overnight							

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Sun



CHILD5

ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

CHILD 5

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD5

4.5 Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD5? (INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used – circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD5

5.5 Do any of the following people look after CHILD5? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex –partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other female relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other male relative (SPECIFY )	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends(s) – female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends – male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other (Specify)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week

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CHILD6

ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 11

CHILD 6

OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR CHILD6

4.6 Do you use any of the following childcare services for CHILD6? (INTERVIEWER: Read each type and ask which of the options best describes how often used – circle the answer)

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Breakfast/morning club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
After school club	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Holiday playschemes	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Private day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Local authority day nursery	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
parent & toddler group	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Registered childminder	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Live-in au pair/nanny	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Work place crèche/daycare	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Drop-in crèche (shopping, leisure)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Family/community centre crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
College or training institution crèche	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Other (Specify) _____	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

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OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER CHILD6

5.6 Do any of the following people look after CHILD6? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your mother	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your father	N/A	never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's mother	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's father	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex -partner's sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your ex-partner's brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older sister(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Your child's older brother(s)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other female relative (SPECIFY _____)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other male relative (SPECIFY _____)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends(s) – female	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Friend or friends – male	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (female)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Neighbour(s) (male)	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week
Other (Specify) _____	N/A	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times week

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SECTION 2 – REGULAR CHILD CARERS  
(FAMILY/RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS)

INTERVIEWER NOTES: LOOKING FOR UP TO 3 REGULAR CARERS WHO ARE FAMILY OR FRIENDS/NEIGHBOURS – REGULAR MEANS AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK – START WITH MOST FREQUENT CARER

- INCLUDE ALL FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OR NEIGHBOURS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S NON-RESIDENT PARENT(S)
- DO NOT INCLUDE RESPONDENT OR RESPONDENT'S PARTNER WHO THEY LIVE WITH
- DO NOT INCLUDE REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS

“What I want to do now is ask some further questions about the family and friends who look after your children UNDER THE AGE 11 on a regular basis - by: ‘regular’ I mean AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK. If we could start by listing these people (these are people other than you and your partner).

(IF NO ONE ELSE LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK MOVE TO SECTION 3)

CARER1 \_\_\_\_\_  
CARER2 \_\_\_\_\_  
CARER3 \_\_\_\_\_  
CARER1 \_\_\_\_\_

“Beginning with CARER1 could I ask...”

7.1 On average how many hours per week do they look after your child/ren?

Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 5 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 6 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

8.1 For how long have they looked after your child/ren on a regular basis?

Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 5 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 6 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

9.1 Does this person usually look after your child/ren in...

Your house  
Their own house  
Both (your house and their house)  
OR Somewhere else (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

1

2

3

10.1 How far away from you does this person live?

- Within quarter of a mile  
1-2 miles away  
3-5 miles away  
5-10 miles away  
10+ miles away

1

2

3

4

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11.1 Does this person ever do any of the following? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often – circle the answer)

	1	2	3	4	5
Take your child/ren to school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Collect your child/ren from school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Ever look after your child/ren overnight	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Look after your child/ren in school holidays	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

12.1 Does this person have a car or access to a car while they are looking after your child/ren?

- Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

13.1 What is this person's age (approximately)?

14.1 Does this person have any difficulties as the result of a disability or health problems?

- Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES

What are these difficulties?

15.1 Is this person...

- Married/living with a partner  
Single  
Divorced  
Separated  
Widow/widower

1

2

3

4

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16.1 Does this person have children of their own under the age of 16?

Yes ☐1  
No ☐2  
Don't know ☐3

IF YES  
How old are the children? \_\_\_\_\_

17.1 Do you know if this person has had any of the following previous experience of looking after children either paid or as a volunteer? (Tick all that apply)

Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
School classroom assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nanny	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nursery nurse/assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-school/playgroup assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Qualified teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

18.1 Is this person...(choose one only)

In paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Retired	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Someone who looks after the home	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Long-term sick	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

IF CARER IS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

19.1 How many hours per week do they work?

\_\_\_\_\_

20.1 Does this person work shifts?

Yes ☐1  
No ☐2  
Don't know ☐3

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Age ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐

<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/> 1=yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2=no

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Hours ☐☐:☐☐

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21.1 Does this person do any voluntary work? (eg. working for a charity, community work, helping out in schools or helping out neighbours with shopping, gardening etc)

Yes ☐1  
No ☐2  
Don't know ☐3

IF YES  
What is the voluntary work they do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22.1 How many hours per week do they spend doing voluntary work?

\_\_\_\_\_

23.1 Does this person provide care for anyone else (eg. sick relative, friend or neighbour?)

Yes ☐1  
No ☐2  
Don't know ☐3

IF YES  
Who is it that they provide care for? \_\_\_\_\_  
(their relationship to this person)

AND  
Hour many hours per week do they care for this person? \_\_\_\_\_

24.1 In order of importance please give UP TO three main reasons that this person looks after your children for you? (MARK 1, 2, 3 IN BOXES PROVIDED)

CARD1

To allow you to do paid work outside the home	<input type="checkbox"/> 01
To allow you to do voluntary work	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
To allow you to attend a course, study or train	<input type="checkbox"/> 03
To allow you to take part in hobbies/personal interests	<input type="checkbox"/> 04
To allow you to go shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> 05
To allow you to look after your other child/ren	<input type="checkbox"/> 06
To give you a break from the child/ren	<input type="checkbox"/> 07
To allow you to go out and meet friends	<input type="checkbox"/> 08
To allow you to go out with your partner	<input type="checkbox"/> 09
Other (SPECIFY) _____	

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Hours ☐☐:☐☐

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Hours ☐☐:☐☐

☐☐1<sup>st</sup> ☐☐2<sup>nd</sup> ☐☐3<sup>rd</sup>



25.1 Do you give this person anything for looking after your child/ren? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE STRESS AGAIN THAT INFORMATION IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL)

YES... Tick all that apply

I look after their child/ren in return	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do other things for them in return, eg shopping, housework, etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I pay them what I can afford	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I pay them an hourly/weekly rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give them money for expenses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give them regular or occasional gifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Anything else \_\_\_\_\_

NO... Tick all that apply

They will not take anything	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cannot afford to give them anything	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other reason _____		

26.1 How satisfied are you with the way this person looks after your child/ren?

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

27.1 Do you have any comments you want to add to the question 26 about how you feel about the way this person looks after your child/ren?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

MOVE TO CARER 2 IF APPLICABLE – IF NO OTHER REGULAR CARER WHO IS A FAMILY MEMBER, FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR THEN MOVE TO SECTION 3 – OTHER CHILDCARE

CARER2

(INTERVIEWER NOTE: NEXT MOST FREQUENT CARER)

REMEMBER:

- INCLUDE ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS OR NEIGHBOURS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S NON-RESIDENT PARENT(S)
- DO NOT INCLUDE RESPONDENT OR RESPONDENT'S PARTNER WHO THEY LIVE WITH
- DO NOT INCLUDE REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS

(IF NO ONE ELSE LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK MOVE TO SECTION 3)

CARER2

7.2 On average how many hours per week do they look after your child/ren?

Child 1	_____	hours per week
Child 2	_____	hours per week
Child 3	_____	hours per week
Child 4	_____	hours per week
Child 5	_____	hours per week
Child 6	_____	hours per week

8.2 For how long have they looked after your child/ren on a regular basis?

Child 1	_____	years	_____	months
Child 2	_____	years	_____	months
Child 3	_____	years	_____	months
Child 4	_____	years	_____	months
Child 5	_____	years	_____	months
Child 6	_____	years	_____	months

9.2 Does this person usually look after your child/ren in...

Your house	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Their own house	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Both (your house and their house)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
OR Somewhere else (SPECIFY) _____		



10.2 How far away from you does this person live?

Under 1 mile away

1-2 miles away

3-5 miles away

6-10 miles away

11+ miles away

1

2

3

4

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11.2 Does this person ever do any of the following? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often - circle the answer)

	1	2	3	4	5
Take your child/ren to school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Collect your child/ren from school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Ever look after your child/ren overnight	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Look after your child/ren in school holidays	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

12.2 Does this person have a car or access to a car while they are looking after your child/ren?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

13.2 What is this person's age (approximately)?

14.2 Does this person have any difficulties as the result of a disability or health problems?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES

What are these difficulties?

15.2 Is this person...

Married/living with a partner

Single

Divorced

Separated

Widow/widower

1

2

3

4

5

16.2 Does this person have children of their own under the age of 16?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES  
How old are the children?

17.2 Do you know if this person has had any of the following previous experience of looking after children either paid or as a volunteer? (Tick all that apply)

Parent

School classroom assistant

Nanny

Nursery nurse/assistant

Pre-school/playgroup assistant

Qualified teacher

1=yes 2=no

1=yes 2=no

1=yes 2=no

1=yes 2=no

1=yes 2=no

1=yes 2=no

Other (SPECIFY)

18.2 Is this person...(choose one only)

In paid employment

Self-employed

Unemployed

Retired

Someone who looks after the home

Long-term sick

Student

Other (SPECIFY)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

IF CARER IS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

19.2 How many hours per week do they work?

20.2 Does this person work shifts?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3



**21.2** Does this person do any voluntary work? (eg, working for a charity, community work, helping out in schools or helping out neighbours with shopping, gardening etc)

	1	2	3
Yes			
No			
Don't know			

**IF YES**  
**What is the voluntary work they do?**

## 22.2 How many hours per week do they spend doing voluntary work?

**23.3** Does this person provide care for anyone else (eg. sick relative, friend or neighbour?)

Yes ☐ 1

No ☐ 2

Don't know ☐ 3

**IF YES**  
**Who is it that they provide care for?**  

---

***(their relationship to this person)***

**AND**  
**Hour many hours per week do they care for this person?**

**24.2** In order of importance please give UP TO three main reasons that this person looks after your children for you? (MARK 1,2, 3 IN BOXES PROVIDED)

**CARD1**

<input type="checkbox"/>	01	To allow you to do paid work outside the home
<input type="checkbox"/>	02	To allow you to do voluntary work
<input type="checkbox"/>	03	To allow you to attend a course, study or train
<input type="checkbox"/>	04	To allow you to take part in hobbies/personal interests
<input type="checkbox"/>	05	To allow you to go shopping
<input type="checkbox"/>	06	To allow you to look after your other child/ren
<input type="checkbox"/>	07	To give you a break from the child/ren
<input type="checkbox"/>	08	To allow you to go out and meet friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	09	To allow you to go out with your partner
		Other (SPECIFY) _____

**25.2** Do you give this person anything for looking after your child/ren? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE STRESS ALL INFORMATION IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL)

**YES... Tick all that apply**

- I look after their child/ren in return**
- I do other things for them in return, eg shopping, housework, etc**
- I pay them what I can afford**
- I pay them an hourly/weekly rate**
- I give them money for expenses**
- I give them regular or occasional gifts**

### Anything else

**NO... Tick all that apply**

**They will not take anything**

**I cannot afford to give them anything**

**Other reason**

## 26.2 How satisfied are you with the way this person looks after your child/ren?

**Very satisfied**

## Satisfied

## Unsure

**Dissatisfied**

**Very dissatisfied**

**27.2** Do you have any comments you want to add to the question 26 about how you feel about the way this person looks after your child/ren?

**MOVE TO CARER 3 IF APPLICABLE – IF NO OTHER  
REGULAR CARER MOVE TO  
SECTION 3 – OTHER CHILDCARE**



CARER3

(INTERVIEWER NOTE: NEXT MOST FREQUENT CARER)  
REMEMBER:

- INCLUDE ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS OR NEIGHBOURS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS
- INCLUDE CHILD/REN'S NON-RESIDENT PARENT(S)
- DO NOT INCLUDE RESPONDENT OR RESPONDENT'S PARTNER WHO THEY LIVE WITH
- DO NOT INCLUDE REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS

(IF NO ONE ELSE LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK MOVE TO SECTION 3)

CARER3

7.3 On average how many hours per week do they look after your child/ren?

- Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 5 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week  
Child 6 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

8.3 For how long have they looked after your child/ren on a regular basis?

- Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 5 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months  
Child 6 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

9.3 Does this person usually look after your child/ren in...

- Your house ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3  
Their own house  
Both (your house and their house)  
OR Somewhere else (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

10.3 How far away from you does this person live?

- Under 1 mile away ☐ 1  
1-2 miles away ☐ 2  
3-5 miles away ☐ 3  
6-10 miles away ☐ 4  
11+ miles away ☐ 5

11.3 Does this person ever do any of the following? (INTERVIEWER: Read each and ask which of the options best describes how often - circle the answer)

	1	2	3	4	5
Take your child/ren to school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Collect your child/ren from school or daycare/nursery	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Ever look after your child/ren overnight	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week
Look after your child/ren in school holidays	Never	once (or less) per month	A few times a month	1-2 times a week	3 or more times a week

12.3 Does this person have a car or access to a car while they are looking after your child/ren?

- Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

13.3 What is this person's age (approximately)?

\_\_\_\_\_

14.3 Does this person have any difficulties as the result of a disability or health problems?

- Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

IF YES

What are these difficulties? \_\_\_\_\_

15.3 Is this person...

- Married/living with a partner ☐ 1  
Single ☐ 2  
Divorced ☐ 3  
Separated ☐ 4  
Widow/widower ☐ 5



16.3 Does this person have children of their own under the age of 16?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES  
How old are the children? \_\_\_\_\_

17.3 Do you know if this person has had any of the following previous experience of looking after children either paid or as a volunteer?  
(Tick all that apply)

Parent

School classroom assistant

Nanny

Nursery nurse/assistant

Pre-school/playgroup assistant

Qualified teacher

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

18.3 Is this person...(choose one only)

In paid employment

Self-employed

Unemployed

Retired

Someone who looks after the home

Long-term sick

Student

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

IF CARER IS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

19.3 How many hours per week do they work?

\_\_\_\_\_

20.3 Does this person work shifts?

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

21.3 Does this person do any voluntary work? (eg, working for a charity, community work, helping out in schools or helping out neighbours with shopping, gardening etc)

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES  
What is the voluntary work they do?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22.3 How many hours per week do they spend doing voluntary work?

\_\_\_\_\_

23.3 Does this person provide care for anyone else (eg, sick relative, friend or neighbour?)

Yes

No

Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES  
Who is it that they provide care for? \_\_\_\_\_  
(their relationship to this person)

AND  
How many hours per week do they care for this person? \_\_\_\_\_

24.3 In order of importance please give UP TO three main reasons that this person looks after your children for you? (MARK 1, 2, 3 IN BOXES PROVIDED)

CARD1

To allow you to do paid work outside the home

To allow you to do voluntary work

To allow you to attend a course, study or train

To allow you to take part in hobbies/personal interests

To allow you to go shopping

To allow you to look after your other child/ren

To give you a break from the child/ren

To allow you to go out and meet friends

To allow you to go out with your partner

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

08

09

1<sup>st</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>



25.3 Do you give this person anything for looking after your child/ren? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE STRESS ALL INFORMATION IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL)

YES... Tick all that apply

- I look after their child/ren in return
- I do other things for them in return, eg shopping, housework, etc
- I pay them what I can afford
- I pay them an hourly/weekly rate
- I give them money for expenses
- I give them regular or occasional gifts

Anything else

NO... Tick all that apply

- They will not take anything
- I cannot afford to give them anything
- Other reason

26.3 How satisfied are you with the way this person looks after your child/ren?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Unsure
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

27.3 Do you have any comments you want to add to the question 26 about how you feel about the way this person looks after your child/ren?

MOVE TO SECTION 3 – OTHER CHILDCARE

SECTION 3 – OTHER CHILDCARE

\*I would like to ask a few questions about who looks after your children in emergencies or on an occasional basis. If you could just say what happens or who looks after your children in each situation.

28. Who most often looks after your children in the following situations?

In an emergency (choose one only)

- Your partner (if applicable)
- Family member (SPECIFY)
- Friend
- Neighbour
- Other (SPECIFY)

In the school holidays (for school aged children only)

(INTERVIEWER NOTE CHOOSE ONE ONLY UNLESS CLEARLY NOT ONE ONLY BUT AN EQUAL COMBINATION OF MORE THAN ONE ARRANGEMENT DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS – IF SO THEN EXPLAIN THIS IN 'OTHER' BELOW)

- I look after them myself (not in paid work or study)
- I take time off (work or study) to look after them
- I'm off at the same time (only work term-time)
- My partner looks after them (not in paid work)
- My partner takes times off to look after them
- My partner is off at same time (only works term-time)
- They go to a holiday club
- Family member (relationship)
- Friend
- Neighbour
- Other

When you are ill (choose one only)

- Your partner (if applicable)
- Family member (SPECIFY)
- Friend
- Neighbour
- Other (SPECIFY)

When you have to go to appointments (choose one only)

- I take the child/ren with me
- I make appointments while child/ren are in school
- Your partner (if applicable)
- Family member (SPECIFY)
- Friend
- Neighbour
- Other (SPECIFY)



When you go out in the evening with your partner (choose one only)

Not applicable

Family member (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

Friend

Neighbour

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

When you go out in the evening on your own (choose one)

Your partner – if applicable

Family member (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

Childminder

Friend

Neighbour

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

29. Who most often takes your children to school or nursery/daycare? \_\_\_\_\_

30. Who most often collects you children from school or nursery/daycare? \_\_\_\_\_

31. Some parents have set up babysitting circles where a group of parents take it in turns to look after each other's children. Are you a member of a babysitting circle or childcare group like this?

Yes

No

IF YES

How many people are involved in the babysitting group? \_\_\_\_\_

AND

How often do you use the babysitting group? \_\_\_\_\_

32. Do you have any other arrangements with parents whereby they look after your children and in exchange you look after their children?

Yes

No

IF YES

How often does this happen \_\_\_\_\_

33. Is there anyone else who looks after your children on an occasional basis who has not already been mentioned? \_\_\_\_\_

IF YES

What is the reason or reasons they look after your children for you? \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 4 - MOTHERS' PAID WORK/WORK HISTORY AND STUDYING/TRAINING

INTERVIEWER NOTES: THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION IS TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE MOTHER'S WORK OR WORK HISTORY AND/OR ANY STUDYING OR TRAINING SHE IS DOING. IT SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN ALL CASES EVEN IF YOU ARE INTERVIEWING THE SPOUSE/PARTNER/FATHER – IN THIS CASE ASK THEM TO ANSWER AS MANY QUESTIONS AS POSSIBLE ABOUT MOTHER'S WORK

HOWEVER, IF INTERVIEWING A LONE PARENT WHO IS A FATHER LIVING ON HIS OWN THEN PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION USING HIS WORK/WORK HISTORY DETAILS – SUBSTITUTE 'FATHER' FOR 'MOTHER' IN EACH QUESTION. IF THIS IS THE CASE PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF THIS IN THE SPACE BELOW' \_\_\_\_\_

IF MOTHER (or lone parent father) IS THE RESPONDENT

"I would now like to ask you some questions about any paid work or studying you are doing now or any paid work you have done in the past. We are asking about this as it will help us to understand how parents manage childcare when they are at work or studying. Your views are really important even if you are not in paid work or studying at the moment."

IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE MOTHER IS THE RESPONDENT

"I would like to ask you to answer as many of the following questions as possible about the mother's paid work or time spent studying. We are asking about this as it will help us to understand how parents manage childcare when they are at work or studying."

34. Is the mother currently in paid employment?

Yes

No

IF YES

Complete '4.1 - MOTHERS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT'

IF NO

Complete '4.2 - MOTHERS NOT IN PAID EMPLOYMENT'



4.1 – MOTHERS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

35. What does the mother do in her job(s)? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: ONE JOB MEANS ONE EMPLOYER – MAY DO DIFFERENT JOBS BUT FOR SAME EMPLOYER. MAIN JOB IS WHERE MOTHER WORKS MOST HOURS PER WEEK)

MAIN JOB \_\_\_\_\_  
Job 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Job 3 \_\_\_\_\_

36. Does the mother work the same hours each week?

Same hours ☐ 1  
Changing hours ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

37. In a typical week when does the mother usually work and how many hours does she work each day?

Monday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Tuesday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Wednesday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Thursday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Friday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Saturday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
Sunday	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____
	Start _____	Finish _____	Number of hours _____

Main job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Tuesday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Wednesday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Thursday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Friday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Saturday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Sunday	start _____	finish _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

38. Does the mother work shifts?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

IF YES

In the last month has the mother worked any of the following shifts? (Tick all that apply)

Night shifts ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Weekends ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Evenings or twilight shifts ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Early morning shifts (start before 7:30am) ☐ 1=yes 2=no

Other shiftwork (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

39. In her job(s) is the mother...

MAIN JOB: An employee ☐ 1 Self-employed ☐ 2  
Job 2: An employee ☐ 1 Self-employed ☐ 2  
Job 3: An employee ☐ 1 Self-employed ☐ 2

40. Does the mother...

Go out of the house to work ☐ 1  
Work from home ☐ 2  
Both ☐ 3

41. How far does the mother travel to work?

Under 1 mile ☐ 1  
1-2 miles ☐ 2  
3-5 miles ☐ 3  
6-10 miles ☐ 4  
11+ miles ☐ 5  
Various (Travels for work) ☐ 6

42. Are any of the mother's jobs 'job-share'?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

43. Are the mother's hours of work flexible?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

☐

☐ 1=yes 2=no  
☐ 1=yes 2=no  
☐ 1=yes 2=no  
☐ 1=yes 2=no

Main job

☐

Job 2

☐

Job 3

☐☐☐☐☐



44. Does the mother work only within school hours?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

☐1  
☐2  
☐3

45. Does the mother work in term-time only (therefore not working during school holidays)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

☐1  
☐2  
☐3

46. Does the mother get any sort of allowance for childcare from any of her employers?

Yes  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

☐1  
☐2  
☐3  
☐4

47. In her job/jobs is the mother allowed time off to care for sick child/ren?

MAIN JOB: Yes ☐1 No ☐2 Don't know ☐3  
Job2: Yes ☐1 No ☐2 Don't know ☐3  
Job3: Yes ☐1 No ☐2 Don't know ☐3

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

48. What are the main reasons the mother is in paid employment? (UP TO three main reasons INTERVIEWER NOTE: GET CARD 2 Ask respondent to choose main reason – mark 1, then 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> if applicable)

CARD2

To add to family budget ☐1  
For career reasons ☐2  
Enjoy working and being other adults ☐3  
To get a break from being at home with the children ☐4  
Other reason (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

49. In the last 5 years how long has the mother spent...

In paid work \_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths  
At home looking after children \_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths  
Unemployed (looking for work) \_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths  
On the sick \_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths  
In training or education \_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

50. What is the mother's income only from ALL paid employment? (INTERVIEWER GET INCOME CARD NO 3 – ask respondent to choose the letter beside the row that applies)

CARD 3

A less than £100 per week ☐1  
B between £101-£200 per week ☐2  
C between £201-£300 per week ☐3  
D between £301-£400 per week ☐4  
E between £401-£500 per week ☐5  
F between £501-£600 per week ☐6  
G between £601-£700 per week ☐7  
H between £701-£800 per week ☐8  
I above £800 per week ☐9

51. How satisfied is the mother with the current arrangements for having her child/ren looked after when she is at work? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ONLY WORKING IN SCHOOL HOURS WRITE THIS IN SPACE PROVIDED)

Childcare arrangement 1 \_\_\_\_\_ (enter person or type of childcare)  
Very satisfied satisfied unsure dissatisfied very dissatisfied  
Childcare arrangement 2 \_\_\_\_\_ (enter person or type of childcare)  
Very satisfied satisfied unsure dissatisfied very dissatisfied

ANY COMMENTS ABOUT LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS WHILE WORKING

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

52. What would be the mother's first choice or ideal childcare arrangements when she is at work?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

53. Is this childcare currently available?

Yes ☐1  
No ☐2  
Don't know ☐3



IF NO... Why is this childcare not available? (Choose one main reason only)

CARD 4

- Can't afford it ☐ 01
- No facilities/places available ☐ 02
- Preferred relative is not available as they work ☐ 03
- Preferred friend is not available as they work ☐ 04
- Preferred relative is in poor health ☐ 05
- Preferred relative lives too far away ☐ 07

- Other reason (SPECIFY \_\_\_\_\_)
54. Did the mother take maternity leave for...
- |                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Child1 (youngest) | Yes/No |
| Child2            | Yes/No |
| Child3            | Yes/No |
| Child4            | Yes/No |
| Child5            | Yes/No |
| Child6            | Yes/No |

"Thinking now of your children under age 11 only - I would like you to think back about what the mother did when the oldest child under the age of 11 was born" (INTERVIEWER NOTE: ASK FOR CHILD'S NAME - ENTER NAME MAY BE EASIER TO USE CHILD'S NAME IN THESE QUESTIONS)

55. Which of the following best describes what the mother did after the birth of (use child's name)?

CARD 5

- She was not in paid work when she had that child ☐ 1
- She was working before the birth but did not return to paid work after the baby was born ☐ 2
- Returned to paid work after statutory maternity leave (normal maternity leave - was 14 weeks now 18weeks) ☐ 3
- Returned to paid work after longer than normal maternity leave (longer than 18weeks) ☐ 4
- She was studying/training before the birth but did not return to studying/training after the birth ☐ 5
- Returned to part-time studying or education ☐ 6
- Returned to full-time studying or education ☐ 7

Other \_\_\_\_\_

56. How old was (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

57. What were the childcare arrangements for (child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?

IF RESPONDENT HAS MORE THAN ONE CHILD

58. Which of the following best describes what happened after the birth of the next oldest child under the age of 11? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: ENTER CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_)

CARD 6

- She was not in paid work when she had that child ☐ 1
- She was working before the birth but did not return to paid work after the baby was born ☐ 2
- Returned to paid work after normal maternity leave (normal maternity leave - was 14 weeks now 18weeks) ☐ 3
- Returned to paid work after longer than normal maternity leave (longer than 18wks) ☐ 4
- She was studying/training before the birth but did not return to studying/training after the baby was born ☐ 5
- Returned to part-time studying or education ☐ 6
- Returned to full-time studying or education ☐ 7
- OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

59. How old was (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

60. What were the childcare arrangements for (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?

61. Have you ever had to make any permanent change in regular childcare? (eg. from one type of childcare to another or from one person to another)?

- No changes ☐ 1
- One change ☐ 2
- 1-2 changes ☐ 3
- 3-4 changes ☐ 4
- over 4 changes ☐ 5

IF YES

Thinking of the times you have had to change your regular childcare, what were the reasons for these changes?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



62. Have there been any major emergencies that have affected regular childcare arrangements in the last year?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES  
What were these emergencies:

63. Has the mother ever left employment to stay at home to look after her child/ren because she could not find suitable childcare?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

64. Has the mother ever not taken up a job because she could not find suitable childcare?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

65. Has the mother ever changed jobs in order to fit hours around childcare?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

66. Has the mother ever changed hours of work to fit in with childcare?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

67. Has the mother ever changed hours of work to fit with her partner's hours of work (so that the partner could look after the child/ren)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

## 4.2 - MOTHERS NOT IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

68. Has the mother ever been in paid employment?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

1

2

3

IF YES

How long since the mother was last in paid employment?

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

AND

What job did the mother do in her last employment?

69. In the last 5 years how long has the mother spent....

In paid work

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

At home looking after children

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

Unemployed - looking for work

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

On the sick

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

In training or education

\_\_\_\_\_ yrs \_\_\_\_\_ mths

70. How many paid jobs has the mother had in the last 5 years?

71. What are the THREE main reasons the mother is not in paid employment at present? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: RANK THE THREE CHOICES - MARK 1 for first choice, 2 for second choice, 3 for third choice)

CARD 7

Wants to be at home looking after child/ren

01

Could not afford the childcare she wanted

02

The person she wanted to look after child/ren was not available

03

No jobs available

04

Not qualified for jobs available

05

Could not find a job that paid enough to cover childcare

06

She would lose benefit if she worked

07

Feels it is too stressful to have a paid job and look after child/ren

08

Is in full-time study or education

09

1st

2nd

3rd

MOVE TO SECTION 4.3 - MOTHER'S CURRENTLY STUDYING OR TRAINING



"I now want to ask you a few questions about your plans for paid work in the future...I would stress that the only reason we are asking about this is to help us understand how people plan ahead for their childcare needs..."

72. Is the mother currently looking for paid work?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

IF NO  
Which one of the following best describes the mother's plans?

Will be looking for a job in the next year ☐ 1  
Will be looking for a job in the next 5 years ☐ 2  
Will be looking when children are at school full-time ☐ 3  
Not planning to look for paid employment ☐ 4  
Don't know ☐ 5

73. If the mother decided to take a paid job what would be the main reasons for this?  
(UP TO three main reasons INTERVIEWER NOTE: GET CARD 2. Ask respondent to choose main reason - mark 1<sup>st</sup>, then 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> if applicable)

CARD 2  
To add to family budget ☐  
For career reasons ☐  
Enjoy working and being other adults ☐  
To get a break from being at home with the children ☐  
Other (SPECIFY) ☐

74. If the mother decided to take a paid job what hours would she prefer to work?

Within school hours only ☐ 1  
Only hours when partner not working ☐ 2  
Any hours as long as could get suitable childcare ☐ 3  
Other (SPECIFY) ☐

75. If the mother decided to take a paid job what would be her first choice or ideal arrangements for childcare?

76. Is this childcare choice available to the mother at present?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

IF NO...Why not? (Choose one main reason only)  
CARD 4

Can't afford it ☐ 01  
No facilities/places available ☐ 02  
Preferred relative is not available as they work ☐ 03  
Preferred friend is not available as they work ☐ 04  
Preferred relative is too ill to look after child/ren ☐ 05  
Preferred relative lives too far away ☐ 06  
Other (SPECIFY) ☐

77. Has the mother ever not taken up a job because she could not find suitable childcare?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

ONLY THOSE MOTHERS WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN PAID WORK

78. Has the mother ever left a job to stay home and look after her child/ren because she could not find suitable childcare?

Yes ☐ 1  
No ☐ 2  
Don't know ☐ 3

79. Did the mother take maternity leave for...

Child1 (youngest) Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Child2 Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Child3 Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Child4 Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Child5 Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no  
Child6 Yes/No ☐ 1=yes 2=no

"Thinking now of your children under age 11 only - I would like you to think back about what the mother did when the oldest child under the age of 11 was born"  
(INTERVIEWER NOTE: ASK FOR CHILD'S NAME - ENTER NAME  
MAY BE EASIER TO USE CHILD'S NAME IN THESE QUESTIONS

80. Which of the following best describes what the mother did after the birth of (use child's name)? CARD 5

She was not in paid work when she had that child ☐ 1  
She was working before the birth but did not return to paid work after the baby was born ☐ 2  
Returned to paid work after statutory maternity leave (normal maternity leave - was 14 weeks now 18 weeks) ☐ 3  
Returned to paid work after longer than normal maternity leave (longer than 18 weeks) ☐ 4  
She was studying/training before the birth but did not return to studying/training after the baby was born ☐ 5  
Returned to part-time studying or education ☐ 6  
Returned to full-time studying or education ☐ 7  
Other ☐



IF RETURNED TO WORK or EDUCATION

81. How old was (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?  

\_\_\_\_\_yrs \_\_\_\_\_mths
82. What were the childcare arrangements for (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

IF RESPONDENT HAS MORE THAN ONE CHILD

83. Which of the following best describes what happened after the birth of the next oldest child under the age of 11? -ENTER CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CARD 6

- She was not in paid work when she had that child 

1
- She was working before the birth but did not return to paid work after the baby was born 

2
- Returned to paid work after statutory maternity leave (normal maternity leave - was 14 weeks now 18weeks) 

3
- Returned to paid work after longer than normal maternity leave (longer than 18weeks) 

4
- She was studying/training before the birth but did not return to studying/training after the baby was born 

5
- Returned to part-time studying or education 

6
- Returned to full-time studying or education 

7

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

IF RETURNED TO WORK or EDUCATION

84. How old was (use child's name) when mother returned to work or education?  

\_\_\_\_\_yrs \_\_\_\_\_mths
85. What were the childcare arrangements for (use child's name) when the mother returned to work or education?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MOVE TO SECTION 4.3 -- MOTHER'S CURRENTLY STUDYING OR TRAINING

4.3 -- MOTHERS CURRENTLY STUDYING OR TRAINING -- FORMAL QUALIFICATION

INTERVIEWER NOTE: THIS SECTION IS ABOUT STUDYING OR TRAINING DIRECTED AT A FORMAL QUALIFICATION (EG, GCSEs, NVQs, DIPLOMAS, UNIVERSITY DEGREE, ETC). RECREATIONAL AND GENERAL INTEREST COURSES ARE COVERED IN SECTION 7.

IF MOTHER (or lone parent father) IS THE RESPONDENT

"I would now like to ask you some questions about any formal education or training you are doing at present, such as GCSE's, NVQs, diplomas or university degree. The reason we are asking about this is to find out how parents manage childcare when they are studying or training."

IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE MOTHER IS THE RESPONDENT

"I would like to ask you to answer as many of the following questions as possible about any formal education or training such as GCSE's, NVQs, diplomas or university degree the mother may be doing at present. The reason we are asking about this is to find out how parents manage childcare when they are studying or training."

86. Is the mother currently studying or training? (NOTE: If just finished a course and starting a new course soon or on summer break -- then considered as 'currently studying')

Yes

No

Don't know

IF NO OR DON'T KNOW (Move to 'SECTION 5 --PARTNERS' PAID WORK/WORK HISTORY")

IF YES

87. How many hours per week does the mother study or train?  
classroom hours (lessons, lectures, tutorials etc)  
personal study time (work at home, library etc)

88. When during the week does the mother usually study or train?

(This includes times studying at home)

	Mornings	Afternoons	Evenings
Mondays	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Tuesday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Wednesday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Thursday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Friday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Saturday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Sunday	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>

1=yes 2=no

M	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
T	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
W	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
T	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
F	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
S	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
S	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>



89. Does the mother...

Go out of the house to study or train

Study/train from home

Both

1

2

3

90. What education or training course is the mother doing?

91. Which college/university

OR

Which training agency

92. What is the main reason the mother is currently studying or training?

93. When the mother is studying/training who usually looks after the child/ren?

(INTERVIEWER NOTE: RECORD ALL TYPES OF CHILDCARE MENTIONED)

94. How satisfied is the mother with the current childcare arrangements when she is studying or training?

(INTERVIEWER NOTE: 2 MAIN TYPES OF CHILDCARE USED WHEN STUDYING OR TRAINING - circle level of satisfaction)

Childcare arrangement 1

satisfied

unsure

dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

(enter person or type of childcare)

Childcare arrangement 2

satisfied

unsure

dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

(enter person or type of childcare)

ANY COMMENTS ABOUT LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT CHILDCARE WHILE STUDYING OR TRAINING

95. Does the mother get any sort of allowance or help with childcare while studying or training?

Yes

No

Don't know

IF YES...

Subsidised crèche place for child/ren

Free crèche place for child/ren

Receives money from University Access Fund

Other (SPECIFY)

SECTION 5 – PARTNERS' PAID WORK/ WORK HISTORY

INTERVIEWER NOTE: ONLY COMPLETE IF MOTHER IS LIVING WITH A PARTNER IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD

IF MOTHER IS THE RESPONDENT  
"I would now like to ask you some questions about your partner's paid work...Again, the reason we are asking about this is to find out how families manage childcare while they are working."

IF PARTNER IS THE RESPONDENT  
"I would now like you ask you some questions about your paid work...Again, the reason we are asking about this is to find out how families manage childcare while they are working"

96. Which of the following best describes what the partner is doing now?

Working full-time (30 or more hours per week)

Working part-time (8-29 hours per week)

On a government training scheme (eg, training for work, New Deal)

Unemployed – looking for work

Looking after the home and family

Long-term sick

Retired

Student

Other (SPECIFY)

97. In the last 5 years, how long has the partner spent...

In paid work

yrs

mths

At home looking after children

yrs

mths

Unemployed – looking for work

yrs

mths

On the sick

yrs

mths

In training or education

yrs

mths

98. How many jobs has the partner had in the last 5 years?

IF PARTNER IS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT NOW

99. Is the partner... An employee1 Self-employed2

100. How far does the partner travel to work?

Under 1 mile

1-2 miles

3-5 miles

6-10 miles

11+ miles

Various (Travels for work)

Works away from home

MOVE TO SECTION 5 – PARTNERS WORK



101. Does the partner work shifts?

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

102. In the last month has the partner worked any of these shifts? (Tick all that apply)

Night shifts ☐

Weekends ☐

Evenings or twilight shifts ☐

Early morning shifts (starts before 7:30am) ☐

Other shiftwork (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

103. Does the partner have more than one job?

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

104. What is the partner's main job? \_\_\_\_\_

105. How many hours per week does the partner normally work? \_\_\_\_\_

106. Does the partner work overtime on a regular basis? (At least twice per month)

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

107. Did partner any take time off from work when any of the children were born?

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

IF YES...What type of time off or leave was this?

Took personal holiday time ☐1

Took unpaid time off or leave ☐2

Was given paid time off or leave (eg, paternity leave) ☐3

Other \_\_\_\_\_

IF NO...What was the reason for this?

This was not available to the partner ☐1

The partner did not want to take time off ☐2

Couldn't afford to take time off ☐2

Other \_\_\_\_\_

108. Does the partner's employer allow time off to care for sick children?

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

109. Does the partner get any allowance for childcare from their employer?

Yes  
No

☐1

☐2

## SECTION 6 - GENERAL

"In this section I would like to read a number of statements to you..."

110. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
([INTERVIEWER NOTE: Circle answer])

I think it is important that at least one parent stays home to look after children when they are under 1 year old

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I think it is best if a mother stays home and looks after child/ren when they are under 1 year old

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I think it is important that at least one parent stays home to look after children when they are under school age

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I think it is best if a mother stays home and looks after child/ren when they are under school age

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

If I was going to use a childminder to look after my child/ren I would only use someone I knew well

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

I think it is important that the person that looks after my child/ren on a regular basis is trained and registered to look after child/ren (unless they are members of my family)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

When I'm not available I prefer my child/ren to be looked after in a home environment by one person rather other than in group childcare (eg, nurseries, or out-of-school clubs)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I feel I cannot afford to pay for regular childcare

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I think there should be more subsidised day nursery places for parents with children under school age

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

When I'm not available I prefer my child/ren to be in group childcare where they learn to mix and socialise with other children (other than when they are at school)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

I would not feel happy leaving a child under 1 year old in a day nursery

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I would not feel happy leaving a child under 2 years old in a day nursery

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I would not feel happy leaving a child under 3 years old in a day nursery

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

☐1=yes 2=no

☐1=yes 2=no

☐1=yes 2=no

☐1=yes 2=no

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐1

☐2

☐3

☐4

☐5

☐6

☐7

☐8

☐9

☐10

☐11

☐12

☐13







116. Who is mainly responsible for the following tasks in your household?

CARD 9

INTERVIEWER CODES: (For EACH task enter the number in the box alongside the task)	
I do all of it	=1
I do most of it	=2
We share is equally	=3
Partner does most of it	=4
Partner does all of it	=5
Another household member	=6
Another person who is not a household member	=7
No one	=8

Cooking (main meal)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washing up	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleaning the house	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washing clothes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ironing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardening	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organising household finances	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 8 - INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY/VOLUNTARY WORK

"This next section is about you and your family's use of local facilities and your involvement in voluntary work in your local community... Again, the reason we are asking this is to see how parents manage their other activities alongside childcare arrangements."

CARD 10

INTERVIEWER CODES: (For EACH facility enter code in the box for 'how often' and 'who with')		
How often	Who With (choose ONE only - most often)	
Never	=1 Not applicable	=1
Once (or less) per month	=2 Me alone	=2
A few times per month	=3 My partner alone	=3
1-2 times per week	=4 Both me and my partner together	=4
3 or more times a week	=5 Their grandparent(s)	=5

117. How often do your children use any of the following facilities with you or your partner or with someone else who looks after them?

Softplay		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			
Swimming/sports/leisure centre		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			
Local park (during good weather)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			
Library		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			
Toy library		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			
Parent & toddler/playgroup		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often			
Who with			
(SPECIFY IF SOMEONE OTHER THAN ABOVE)			



118. Are your children involved in any of the following activities? (Tick all that apply)

Youth clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guides/Brownies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scouts/Beavers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Woodcraft folk/rainbow	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dance classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

119. Who would most often take your child/ren to and collect them from these clubs/activities? CARD 11 (choose one only)

Me alone	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner alone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes me and sometimes my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both me and my partner together	<input type="checkbox"/>
Their grandparent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
They go by themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>
Someone else takes them	<input type="checkbox"/>

(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

120. Do you do classes or courses at your local community centre or college (eg. general interest classes, or parenting classes etc)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

IF YES What class or course are you doing? \_\_\_\_\_

AND Who usually looks after your child/ren when you are taking part in these activities? \_\_\_\_\_

IF RESPONDENT LIVES WITH PARTNER

121. Does your partner do classes or courses at your local community centre or college (eg. general interest classes, or parenting classes etc)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

IF YES What class or course is your partner doing? \_\_\_\_\_

AND Who usually looks after your child/ren when your partner is taking part in these activities? \_\_\_\_\_

122. Do you do any voluntary work in the community?

Yes ☐ No ☐

<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

IF YES

What type of activities are you involved in? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Running or helping to run a parent & toddler group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work for a charity or voluntary organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help out as a classroom assistant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise or help out with local events
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involved with local community action groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sit on or attend local committees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help to neighbours (eg. gardening, shopping etc)

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

AND

How many hours per week do you spend doing voluntary work? \_\_\_\_\_

123. Who most often looks after your child/ren when you do voluntary work?

124. Do you get any childcare allowance when you do voluntary work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

IF RESPONDENT LIVES WITH PARTNER

125. Does your partner do any voluntary work in the community?

Yes ☐ No ☐

IF YES

What type of activities? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Running or helping to run a parent & toddler group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help out as a classroom assistant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work for a charity or voluntary organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise or help out with local events
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involved with local community action groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sit on or attend local committees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help to neighbours (eg. gardening, shopping etc)

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

AND

How many hours per week does your partner do voluntary work? \_\_\_\_\_

126. Who most often looks after your child/ren when your partner is doing voluntary work? \_\_\_\_\_

127. Does your partner get childcare allowance when doing voluntary work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no
<input type="checkbox"/>	1=yes 2=no

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------



SECTION 9 – GOVERNMENT POLICY

"I would now like to you ask you some questions about some of the recent government policies to do with families and childcare. Can I start by asking..."

128. Have you heard of Working Family Tax Credit?

Yes

No

1

2

129. Have you ever applied for Working Family Tax Credit?

Yes

No

1

2

IF YES

Do you currently receive Working Family Tax Credit?

Yes

No

1

2

IF RESPONDENT HAS APPLIED BUT NOT CURRENTLY RECEIVING THIS CREDIT WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS

130. Do you know what the Childcare Tax Credit is?

Yes

No

1

2

131. Have you ever applied for Childcare Tax Credit?

Yes

No

1

2

IF YES

Do you currently receive Childcare Tax Credit?

Yes

No

1

2

IF RESPONDENT HAS APPLIED BUT NOT CURRENTLY RECEIVING THIS CREDIT WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS

132. Do you know about the registration of childminders or the vetting'/police checking of people who look after children on a regular basis?

Yes

No

1

2

IF YES

Do you have any direct experience of or any views you would like to give about this process?

CHILDCARE TAX CREDIT

INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT IS A LONE PARENT USE EXAMPLE 1 – IF LIVING WITH PARTNER USE EXAMPLE 2

"I would now like to tell you a little bit about Childcare Tax Credit by giving an example of how it works..."

EXAMPLE 1 – Julie

Julie is a lone parent who has 2 children aged 2 and 5. She works 18 hours per week during school hours. On the three days that Julie works her retired mother looks after her 2 year old child. Julie qualifies for the new tax credit (Working Family Tax Credit) for people on low or middle incomes. As she qualifies for this she also qualifies for extra help with the cost of childcare through Childcare Tax Credit. However, Childcare Tax Credit is only paid for registered childcare – that is childcare such as registered day nurseries, out-of-school clubs or registered childminders. Julie has been told that a friend or family member (such as Julie's mother – but does not apply for spouses or partners) could register to become a childminder to look after children only. Therefore, Julie has asked her mother to become a registered childminder so she can claim for Childcare Tax Credit.

EXAMPLE 2 – Mary and Peter

Mary and Peter both work – Peter works full-time and Mary works 18 hours per week. Their have a 5 year old child in full-time school. Their 2 year old is looked after by Mary's retired mother three days a week for 6 hours each day while Mary works. Mary and Peter qualify for the new tax credit (Working Family Tax Credit) for people on low or middle incomes. As they qualify for this they also qualify for extra help with the cost of childcare through Childcare Tax Credit. However, Childcare Tax Credit is only paid for registered childcare – that is childcare such as registered day nurseries, out-of-school clubs or registered childminders. Mary and Peter have been told that a friend or family member (such as Mary's mother) could register to become a childminder to look after children only. Therefore, Mary and Peter have asked Mary's mother to become a registered childminder so they can claim for Childcare Tax Credit.

133. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(circle answer) INTERVIEWER NOTE: 'family' refers to all family members except spouse or partner

FAMILY

I don't think family members should have to become registered for me to be able to claim Childcare Tax Credit

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I don't think it is right to pay family to look after my child/ren

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

When me or my partner are not available I prefer or would prefer family members to look after my child/ren

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

My parents would not want to be paid to look after my child/ren

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

N/A

My partner's parents would not want to be paid to look after my child/ren

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

N/A

I feel or would feel as if I am 'putting onto' family members by asking them to look after my child/ren on a regular basis

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I feel childcare provided by my family members is the only option available to me

Strongly agree

Agree

Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6

7



I would prefer to pay my family (other than my spouse/partner) for looking after my child/ren on a regular basis

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

If available I would like a member of my family (other than my spouse/partner) to become a registered childminder so I could apply for Childcare Tax Credit

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

If possible I think a member of my family (other than my spouse/partner) would agree to become a registered childminder if they could look after my children only

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

I do not really want members of my own family looking after my children

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

I do not really want members of my spouse/partner's family looking after my children

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

FRIENDS/NEIGHBOURS

When me or my partner are not available I prefer or would prefer close friends to look after my children

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I don't like to ask my friends or neighbours to look after my child/ren on a regular basis as I feel this puts a strain on our friendship

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

I prefer or would prefer to pay my friends or neighbours if they look after my children on a regular basis

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

134. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about these government childcare allowances?

SECTION 10 – YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

"In this final section I would like to ask you some general questions about you and your family..."

135. Who lives in your house with you apart from your children? (Tick all that apply)

No one else

Your partner

Your mother

Your father

Your partner's mother

Your partner's father

Flatmate/housemate(s)

Other (SPECIFY)

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ 1=yes ☐ 2=no

☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐

136. Do you live in a (choose one only)

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

Privately rented flat (including University flats)

Council/housing association rented flat

Privately rented house

Council/housing association rented house

Flat you own or are buying (mortgaged)

House you own or are buying (mortgaged)

Other (SPECIFY)

137. Do you have a car in your household?

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

No car

One car

Two or more cars

138. Do you have a driving licence?

☐ 1

☐ 2

Yes

No

139. Do you have a telephone in your house?

☐ 1

☐ 2

Yes

No

140. Do you have mobile phone?

☐ 1

☐ 2

Yes

No

141. Respondent is

☐ 1

☐ 2

Female

Male







INTERVIEWER NOTE: REMIND RESPONDENT 'CONFIDENTIAL'

152. Could you tell me which kinds of income or benefits currently come into your house? (Read all and tick all that apply)

Earnings from employment or self-employment

Child benefit

Jobseeker's allowance

Income support

Maternity benefit

Disability benefit

Working Family Tax Credit

Childcare Tax Credit

Housing benefit

Council tax benefit or reduction

Interest from savings and investments (eg, stocks and shares)

Child maintenance from a former partner

Student grants

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

153. How much money altogether (after tax) comes into your household a week (including money from your partner and anyone else who contributes) CHOOSE LETTER THAT APPLIES

CARD 3

A less than £100 per week

B between £101-£200 per week

C between £201-£300 per week

D between £301-£400 per week

E between £401-£500 per week

F between £501-£600 per week

G between £601-£700 per week

H between £701-£800 per week

I above £800 per week

154. Do you have any of the following qualifications? (Read all and tick all that apply)

GCSE/GCE/CSE 'O' Level passes

GCE 'A' level or Scottish Highers/HEFC's

NVQ/SVQ

BEC/BTEC

ONC/OND

RSA Diploma

First degree (BSc, BA, BEd)

Higher degree (MSc, MA, MBA, PGCE, PhD)

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL COMMENTS

155. As an opportunity for you to give your views, is there anything you would like to add about support you would like to see for you as a parent to help you with childcare?

156. Is there anything else you would like to add about the role of family or friends in helping parents with childcare?



## **APPENDIX 7**

**Information leaflet**

**For**

**Childcare Survey respondents**



• **Who is doing this survey about childcare?**

The survey is being carried out by the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at Newcastle University, working with the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has been set up to support the National Childcare Strategy. This aims to ensure that all families with children have access to the childcare they prefer. This can only been done by asking parents for their views about childcare. A number of Newcastle parents have been selected at random. These parents have been asked to take part in this childcare survey.

- ***Why we are asking about childcare provided by family and friends***

To allow the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to develop childcare services that are useful and relevant to parents, it is important to know about all kinds of childcare that parents use, including care provided by family and friends.

- ***What's in it for parents and families?***

The opportunity to contribute to and influence the development of childcare services that will be most useful to them. All parents who take part in the survey will also be entered into a prize draw with a first prize of £100, a second prize of £75 and a third prize of £50.

**Useful contact information:**

Early Years and Childcare information Service:	0191 261 7658
Working Family Tax Credit/Childcare Tax Credit:	0800 597 5976
Community Health Services – health visitors, school nurses etc East (covers Sandycroft, Byker, Monkchester, Walker): North (covers Jesmond, Kenton, Gosforth, Heaton):	0191 219 4641 0191 210 6624
East End Resource Centre Includes the following information and advice services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• East End Partnership Team – includes a community resource worker.</li><li>• Citizens Advice Bureau (in-work benefit project)</li></ul>	0191 224 4404
Special Educational needs teaching and support services <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-school support for children with special educational needs (in nursery) – 0191 229 1441</li><li>• Education Support for children in reception class and above – 0191 267 4447</li></ul>	
Parent line Confidential telephone helpline for parents under stress:	0808 800 2222

**You and your childcare**

June 2000

Dear Parent(s)

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this childcare survey. Your views are extremely important and will help us understand how to help and support parents in their choice of childcare. Any information you give us is completely confidential and will not be passed on to anyone else.

This leaflet provides you with some background information about the study. If you have any further questions you should contact Lesley Hall on the number listed below.

The leaflet also lists some useful contact details for finding out about childcare and other related areas.

Thank you again for your valuable time.

Yours faithfully



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## APPENDIX 8

### Non-respondents

Reasons for not taking part in the survey						
	WARDS					
Reason	Dene %	No.	Walker %	No.	Total %	No.
Language difficulties: English was not a first language Mother was hearing impaired	3.4 0.8	4 1	0 0.4	0 1	1.1 0.6	4 2
Doesn't use childcare: Mother doesn't work Children older – no need for childcare	2.5 2.5	3 3	3.9 1.3	9 3	3.4 1.7	12 6
Too busy with work – no time to take part	5.1	6	4.3	10	4.5	16
Holiday: Too busy because of school holidays Going away on holiday	2.5 0.8	3 1	0.8 1.3	2 3	1.4 1.1	5 4
Disabled child – no time to take part	0.8	1	0	0	0.3	1
Just completed questionnaire from school	0.8	1	0	0	0.3	1
Death or illness in the family	2.5	3	0.8	2	1.4	5
Use family only – did not want to take part	0.8	1	0	0	0.3	1
Mother just had a baby – too busy	0	0	0.8	2	0.6	2
Never in when called at house or by phone	13.5	16	33.3	78	26.6	94
Did not want to take part – no other reason given	21.1	25	21.4	50	21.3	75
Moved away – not living at address given (unreachables)	12.6	15	16.7	39	15.3	54
Not in when called for pre-arranged interview	10.1	12	7.7	18	8.5	30
Called before survey began to have name removed from contact list	20.2	24	7.3	17	11.6	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>353</b>



## APPENDIX 9

### Representativeness of the households in the study compared to total population of Dene and Walker wards and the City of Newcastle as a whole

	% within the Dene Sample	% in all of Dene (City profiles)	% within the Walker Sample	% in all of Walker (City profiles)	% of Total study sample	% in all of Newcastle
Number of children living in lone parent household*	14.5% (49)	10.0%	34.5% (135)	46.0%	25.1% (184)	25.0%
Number of children living in two-parent household*	85.5% (290)	90.0%	65.6% (258)	54.0%	74.9% (548)	75.0%
Rented accommodation	23.7% (37)	20.0%	80.4% (131)	79.0%	52.7% (168)	47.0%
Owner occupied housing	76.3% (119)	80.0%	19.6% (32)	21.0%	47.3% (151)	53.0%
Females not in paid employment	34.2% (52)	28.0%	62.1% (100)	57.0%	48.6% (152)	40.0%
Females in paid employment	65.8% (100)	72.0%	37.9% (61)	43.0%	51.4% (161)	60.0%
Females working full-time (30+ hours per week)	39.0% (39)	61.0%	32.8% (20)	44.0%	36.6% (59)	56.0%
Females working part-time (1-29 hours per week)	61.0% (61)	36.0%	67.2% (41)	39.0%	63.4% (102)	35.0%
Males not in paid employment	8.5% (11)	8.0%	41.2% (42)	44.0%	22.8% (53)	21.0%
Males in paid employment	91.5% (119)	92.0%	58.8% (60)	56.0%	77.2% (179)	79.0%
Males working full-time (30+ hours per week)	94.1% (112)	88.0%	93.3% (56)	55.0%	93.9% (168)	75%
Males working part-time (1-29 hours per week)	5.9% (7)	5.0%	6.7% (4)	2.0%	6.1% (11)	5%
Ethnicity of respondent- White European	94.9% (148)	97.0%	100% (163)	99.0%	97.5% (311)	96.0%
Ethnicity of respondent- Other (see section below for categories)	5.1% (8)	3.0%	0%	1.0%	2.5% (8)	4.0%

Figures for the total ward population and for the City of Newcastle as a whole obtained from the 1996 Inter-Censal Survey [Newcastle City Council, 1997 #552].

\*Here the number of children living with a lone parent or two parents is provided rather than lone parents and two-parent households. This is because this is the only data available for comparison with Newcastle as a whole as this is how the City Council measures this data. Chapter 5 provides lone parent and two-parent households in the study



## APPENDIX 10

### CASE STUDY HOUSEHOLDS - PARENT'S TOPIC GUIDE

#### Household (confirm background information from survey)

- Have things changed since the survey? (insert details from questionnaire regarding work situation, children, childcare used etc)
- IF SO, in what way have they changed– work, childcare etc.?

#### When the children were born (back to the beginning)

- I know you returned to work after when your child(ren) were (ages). Was this your original plan?  
*PROBE:* if changed plans why
- Had you and your partner discussed how you would arrange childcare before deciding to have a baby?  
*PROBE:* if one parent would give up work etc  
Did you always have an idea of the type of the childcare you would want to use?
- I know you said [*insert childcare used*] looked after [*insert child's name*] when you returned to work... was that your first choice?  
*PROBE:* reasons  
*PROBE:* what would have been first choice (staying home, mother etc)
- How was it that [*your family member*] started looking after the children for you?  
*PROBE:* was it pre-arranged, had you already discussed it  
*PROBE:* did they offer or did you ask them  
*PROBE:* family obligation, expected them to do it – they expected to do it  
*PROBE:* think family should help out in this way
- Did you have family members looking after you when you were little?  
*PROBE:* Did mother work, how did their parents arrange childcare  
*PROBE:* has this influenced choice of childcare – 'following in family footsteps'
- Did childcare affect your decisions about work?  
*PROBE:* moved jobs, changed hours, moved house for childcare etc  
*PROBE:* Is employer 'family friendly'
- Was your 'home-life' different before the children were born?  
*PROBE:* Things like – did they share domestic work  
*PROBE:* what about now – is it same - do they share childcare etc
- I know your dad helps out with childcare...do you think fathers and grandfathers should be more involved?

#### Current childcare

- Could you tell me how you arrange the looking after [*insert child's name*] now... a (typical day/ week)
- What is about having [*insert family member*] helping you with childcare that you particularly like?



- Is there anything that bothers you or that you don't like about having *[insert family member]* helping out with childcare?  
**PROBE:** guilt ('putting onto', worry too much for them, don't like feeling reliant on them)  
**PROBE:** conflict/friction (different views about 'bringing up children', discipline issues, values/standards etc)
- Have you ever felt that family childcare was your only option?  
**PROBE:** force of circumstances or 'preference'  
**PROBE:** cost of childcare, flexibility etc
- How do you think *[insert family member]* feel about looking after the children?  
**PROBE:** obligation/resent it OR think they enjoy it/'new lease of life'  
**PROBE:** why do you think they do it
- Do you think your relationship with *[insert family member]* has changed since they started providing childcare on a regular basis?  
**PROBE:** better or worse
- How do you think *[insert child's name]* feels about *[insert family member]* looking after them?  
**PROBE:** do they get on/are they close, any problems

### **Paying family/friends**

- How do you feel about family members being paid to look after your children?  
For example, a grandparent being paid to look after grandchildren, or an aunt/uncle being paid to look after niece or nephew  
**PROBE:** is it different for grandparents and other relatives  
**PROBE:** how do you think it would be best to pay them.
- How do you think *[insert family member]* would feel about being paid?
- Do you think paying *[insert family member]* would change your relationship with them?  
**PROBE:** control issues – more control, less control
- Do you think it would change the way they feel about looking after *[insert child's name]*?  
**PROBE:** becomes a chore or job, they may feel less able to say 'no'
- How do you feel about friends being paid to look after your children?  
**PROBE:** is it different from paying family

### **Other forms of childcare**

- What do you think about other types of childcare such as day nurseries, childminders, out-of-school clubs?  
**PROBE:** Is there an out-of-school club at his school
- What are the best things about these types of childcare in your opinion or from your experiences?
- What are the worst things about them in your opinion or from your experiences?

### **Conclusion**

- In an ideal world, with no limits on money etc, what would be your perfect childcare solution?  
**PROBE:** is this different for different children  
**PROBE:** what about age of child



## APPENDIX 11

### CASE STUDY HOUSEHOLDS - FAMILY CHILDCARER'S TOPIC GUIDE

#### Background

- Carer's background – where they live, other work etc

#### Childcare routine

- Tell me about looking after the *[NAMES OF CHILDREN]* – when do you look after them?
- What is your regular routine with them? (daily and weekly)  
*PROBE:* what type of things do you do together
- What about school holidays? Emergencies (illness, teacher training days etc)
- Do you see the children other than when you are looking after them? (ie, not for childcare purposes)  
*PROBE:* are these times different

#### Background – when they started looking after the children

- How long have you been looking after *[NAMES OF CHILDREN]*?
- How was it that you started looking after the children?  
*PROBE:* parents returned to work, moved from other childcare etc
- Did you offer to look after the children or did *[PARENTS]* ask you?  
*PROBE:* family obligation, expected to do it – think they expected it  
*PROBE:* think family should help out in this way
- What were you doing when you began looking after the children?  
*PROBE:* in paid work, retired, someone who looks after the home
- Did you make any changes in your life so you could look after the children on a regular basis?  
*PROBE:* left paid work, moved house etc
- Do you have other grandchildren that you look after?  
*PROBE:* if other grandchildren – how often  
*PROBE:* any problems with trying to keeping amount of childcare provided 'equal'

#### What is it like being a regular 'childcarer'

- What are the best things about looking after the children?  
*PROBE:* Why do you do it? What do they get out of it,  
(eg, like to help parents - enjoy being with the children etc)
- What things do you like least?  
*PROBE:* Feel tied/obliged, 'bit of a chore' etc



- Would you say your relationship with *[PARENTS]* has changed since you started looking after the children on a regular basis?  
*PROBE:* Conflicts (differences in 'bringing up the children') OR become closer
- What about your relationship with the children?  
*PROBE:* better or worse

### **Own childcare (when carer's children were young)**

- Did your family help you with childcare on a regular basis?  
*PROBE:* why did they help – did she work etc  
*PROBE:* was it 'the expected thing to do' for family to help out
- Do you think things have changed for parents (women in particular)?  
*PROBE:* pressure to go out to work
- Were you happy with how things were when your children were young?  
*PROBE:* if she stayed home is this what she wanted  
*PROBE:* if she went out to work, was this what she wanted

### **Paying family/friends**

- What do you think about family members being paid to look after relative's children? For example, a grandparent being paid to look after children, or an aunt/uncle being paid to look after niece or nephew  
*PROBE:* is it different for grandparents
- Do you think being paid would change your relationship with *[PARENTS]*?  
*PROBE:* control issues – more control, less control
- Do you think it would change how you feel about looking after the children?  
*PROBE:* becomes more of a chore or job, feel less able to no OR would feel more valued, not taken for granted

### **Carer's views about formal childcare**

- What do you think about other types of childcare, eg, nurseries, childminders, out-of-school clubs?
- What are the best things about formal care in your opinion or from your experiences?
- What are the worst things about formal care in your opinion or from your experiences?

### **Conclusion**

- In an ideal world, with no limits on money etc, what do you think is best for children? *PROBE:* is this different by age of child



## APPENDIX 12

Broad occupation categories and examples	
1. <b>Administrative</b>	civil servants; local government officers; admin assistants
2. <b>Professional</b>	Accounting/auditor, financial consultant, directors, financial managers, architects/ surveyors, doctors, nurses, teachers/ lecturers (including headteachers), engineers, librarians, childcare, healthcare, police, army, fire service, social workers, probation officer, personnel, solicitors, careers advisors, training officers
3. <b>White collar</b>	Customer service advisors, clerical/ secretarial/office worker, computing/IT, personal services: - hairdressing, care assistant, beautician – sales/marketing/ retail, supervisor, technician, printer, research worker, bar work
4. <b>Skilled manual</b>	Catering/baker/chef, electrician, joiner, mechanic, electrical engineer, plasterer, fitter
5. <b>Semi-skilled manual</b>	Driver, process/production worker, manufacturing, machinist, painter/decorator, pipe-fitter, maintenance, post-person
6. <b>Unskilled manual</b>	Caretaker, cleaner, labourer, security

Note: These broad categories were adapted from groupings used elsewhere (see Wheelock *et al* 2000). Respondents were asked to 'self-describe' occupations for mothers and fathers as it is difficult in a questionnaire to provide categories of jobs based on standard classifications that respondents will recognise. As the purpose of the analysis was a straightforward comparison of occupations between mothers and fathers a decision was made to use a simplified method of grouping occupations rather than the complex groups and sub-groups used in standard classification models such as the SOC 90 (Standard Occupational Classifications as provided by Office of National Statistics for the UK 1990). Therefore, the self-described job titles were grouped broadly in line with skill requirements and additional requirements for professional training and recognised professional qualifications for the jobs described. As discussed in the analysis in Chapter 5, it is recognised that there are gender differences within the groups particularly in the professional category where the 'caring' professions such as childcare and nursing are notoriously lower paid especially in comparison to more male-orientated professions such as financial services and engineering.